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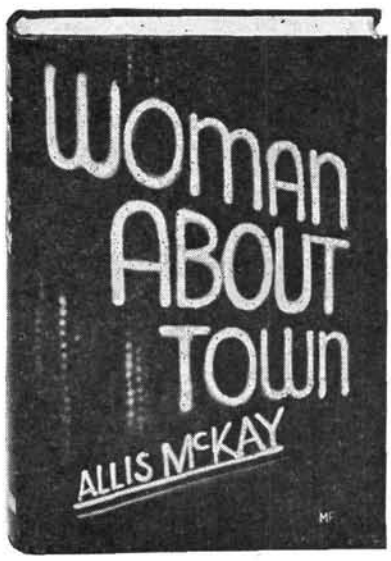

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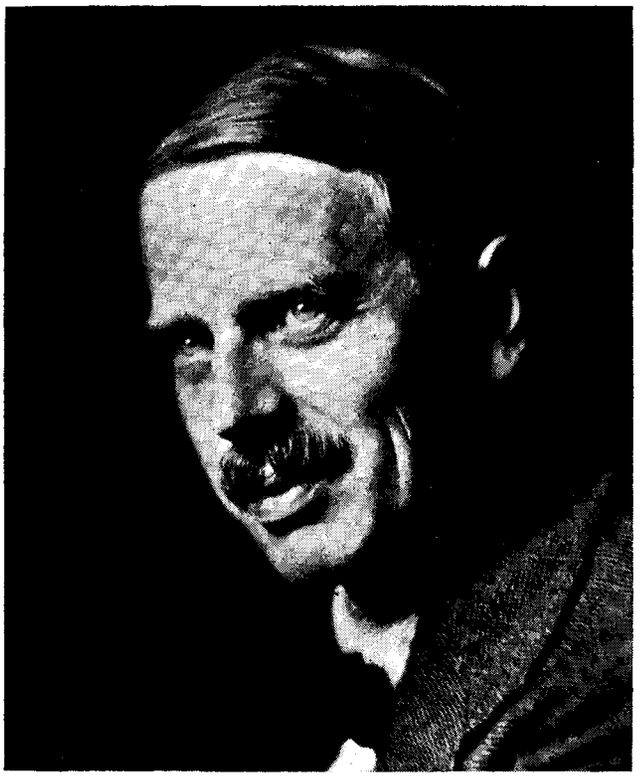
Picking Popular Fiction*

BY WILLIAM L. CHENERY

ABOUT forty years ago, William Dean Howells who, among other qualifications, was himself a magazine editor of wide experience, said that in the half century from 1850 to 1900 the best writing in the United States had been first published in magazines. He was emphatic in the opinion that "in belles lettres at least most of the best literature now sees the light in the magazines and most of the second best appears first in book form." Since Mr. Howells's day magazines have changed in character. The increase in circulations has been enormous. During the past decade at least ten magazines have attained circulations of more than two million. Today the more aggressive women's magazines and weeklies distribute from two and a half million to three million copies to subscribers. The actual number of readers, by any reasonable computation, must be considerably larger.



Edward J. O'Brien. "Magazine editors, generally, seek other values in fiction than those preferred by Mr. O'Brien."

This widening of the field has unquestionably affected the selection of material by editors. The primary duty of any editor is to arouse the attention and to hold the interest of the particular audience he is seeking to serve. The short stories, or the full length novels, likely to appeal to two million or five million readers undeniably differ from the fiction which two hundred thousand or twenty thousand readers might be expected to find enjoyable.

Consequently, I do not think that Mr. Howells's remark could be truthfully repeated today. Many of the good novels written during the past few years have been definitely aimed at audiences more special or smaller than those sought by the larger magazines. The aim of the present-day magazine editor is to select literary material which will interest the entire audience he has found or hopes to assemble. Newspapers, in contrast, seek to weld numerous small audiences into a large composite body. Those newspaper subscribers, for example, who read society notes are not necessarily interested in racing results, or news from the scientific laboratories. Magazines, on the other hand, because of their more restricted space, must look for the general interest in whatever field they invade. If a story deals with slums, society, finance, wrestling, or the war in China, it must be told in a way calculated to reach those who are not at all concerned with the particular subject-matter treated.

This consideration induces the editors of the larger magazines to reject many stories, novels, and articles of lively interest to smaller groups. The impersonal economic influences which have driven publishers to seek circulations numbered in the millions rather than in the thousands, restricted the range of choices of editors. Fiction to be useful to the larger magazine must unquestionably have a very wide appeal.

The literary changes that followed the growth of American magazines, however, have been misconceived and misconstrued by some critics. The standards of excellence have not been lowered. The technique of the short story and of the novel, too, has been improved. I suppose that human ability varies in quality only slightly from generation to generation, but a comparison of the best work done thirty or forty years ago with the good current production confirms the impression that we have not lost ground.

Conspicuous among those who appear to hold that the expansion of the magazine audiences has had a deleterious effect upon magazine fiction is Edward J. O'Brien, who from year to year selects from the magazine stories published by American authors those he ranks highest. He annoys many magazine editors by his title, "The Best Short Stories." By any test which the editors of the larger magazines recognize, Mr. O'Brien's selections do not represent the best short fiction published in American periodicals. Of the making of books there is no monopoly, and there would be no clash between Mr. O'Brien and the editors if he did not designate the stories he republishes as the best magazine products of a given year. Magazine editors, generally, seek other values in fiction than those preferred by Mr. O'Brien.

Because of this divergence of opinion, Mr. O'Brien has tended to find his selections in publications of small and special interest. None of the stories he republishes this year was published by any of the American magazines of large circulation. The specimen with which this year's volume begins is a longish affair taken from the periodical *Story*. Because of the prominent position given this tale, it is interesting to examine it as an illustration of a point of view. The narrative concerns the state of mind of a

Next Week

BRIGHTON ROCK
By GRAHAM GREENE
Reviewed by Basil Davenport

TRENDING INTO MAINE
By KENNETH ROBERTS
Reviewed by E. B. White

* *THE BEST SHORT STORIES—1938 and the Yearbook of the American Short Story—Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.* 1938. $2.50.

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middle-aged postman who tired of walking and so decided to become a tree. Through fifty-two pages the notion of a man turning himself into a tree is meticulously pursued. No allegory or satire enlivens this quaintly insane notion. Page after page details the comments and the conversation incited in an unidentified American city by the phenomenon of a foot-weary letter carrier who wished to become a well-rooted sycamore. Neither rain nor snow nor heat nor gloom of night nor the ribald comments of philistine neighbors stayed this particular courier from the completion of his arboreal transmutation.

Not all of Mr. O'Brien's best short stories reach this high level of gentle lunacy. He includes some effective stories and much excellent quiet writing. His fondness for the miraculous does, however, appear in other of his selections. So in "Mergenthwirker's Lobblies" a hard-boiled assistant city editor tells his story of a pathetic little man who fed beer to his lobblies. In addition to their capacity for absorbing large potations of beer, the lobblies, men suggestive of the Southern Negro's conception of "hants," highly invisible except to Mr. Mergenthwirker, had the gift of foreseeing melodramatic crimes. They would inform their keeper, Mr. Mergenthwirker, of the predestined murder of a poor working girl in the Bronx or of the intended robbing of a juicy bank. Their keeper would, in turn, carry their prophecy to the journalist. At first no one, not even the hard-boiled assistant city editor, would believe the lobblies and so the poor girl of lobbly prevision was murdered on schedule. The very professional assistant city editor took the lesson to heart. When the bank robbery was due he assigned reporters and photographers to chronicle the event. Naturally, the enterprising journalist scooped the competing press and so obtained its reward in praise though not in money.

Better stories are, of course, included in Mr. O'Brien's selections. Stephen Vincent Benét's *Atlantic Monthly* story, "A Tooth for Paul Revere," shows his competent craftsmanship and fine feeling. Promising work from new writers is included. "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies," which first appeared in *The Prairie Schooner*, has a gaiety which can lead Eudora Welty, its creator, to other and larger audiences. In form Mr. O'Brien's selections tend to be sketches or character studies, rather than the compactly organized short stories preferred by the American magazine audiences. Plainly, Mr. O'Brien's best stories were not acceptable to the larger magazines and could not by their very nature have been accepted by the editors who minister to mass circulations. Other stories by some of the same authors who are represented in Mr. O'Brien's volume were published by the larger magazines. Mr. O'Brien clearly preferred and selected the stories which seemed to the magazine editors to be less desirable.

The first obvious difference between Mr. O'Brien's best stories and those the editors of popular magazines tend to select may be found in the matter of narrative pace. Popular fiction is surcharged with the energy which that discerning Chicago editor, the late Henry J. Smith, was accustomed to describe as animal spirits. Not all good fiction moves swiftly, but the writers who possess the gift of infusing abundant vitality into their fiction are almost certain, sooner or later, to attract large audiences.

Perhaps the situation would be made clearer if I attempted to recapitulate the rules by which some magazine editors select what they hope will turn out to be popular fiction. Popular fiction can be good or mediocre or bad. No experienced editor or publisher or critic would say that all the short stories or all the long stories offered by popular magazines, or unpopular magazines for that matter, are first-rate performances. And the rules which govern the selection of fiction intended for publication in the larger magazines have not yet been crystallized in any grammar. Some of these undefined criteria are, however, very clearly understood by editors as well as by writers.

The first and most important rule is that the story be potentially interesting to millions of American readers. If the story has the quality called reader interest, it may violate many of the other conventions and still be acceptable. What interest consists of is hard to define except in examples. Time and circumstance are important factors. "Gone with the Wind" is the most widely read novel of this generation. Thirty years ago public taste had turned definitely against Civil War fiction. Had "Gone with the Wind" been published in 1908 it might have escaped the huge popularity that so recently overwhelmed its young author.

Even though it is difficult to define interest in absolute terms, most editors are able to recognize the quality in a manuscript. For short stories, as well as for novels, there are rules tacitly recognized and generally observed. Most popular magazine editors insist, for example, that the language used be readily intelligible to millions of Americans living in all forty-eight states. This consideration tends to exclude stories written in a dialect difficult for average Americans to comprehend. Of course, the prejudice against dialect is not applied too rigidly. Irish idiom, Scotch, Southern Negro, Southern White, New York Jewish, Northwest Scandinavian, and many other species of speech are used in the telling of exceedingly popular stories. The dialect, however, is admittedly a handicap which must be overcome by other positive values.

I think, too, that the happy ending can certainly be classed as a desirable ingredient in popular fiction. It is not essential; but a tragic conclusion, like dialect, is a factor which must be offset by more desirable qualities. The explanation of the preference for happy endings is not, I think, base. It is to be found in the history of the United States. For better or worse we are a sanguine and optimistic people. We hope and expect that our personal affairs will turn out well. We like to read about people who master their difficulties. If our history were a record of frustration, as is that of the Russian people, we, too, might incline toward bitter defeat in our fiction. Our experience is different and so are our short stories.

If a story seems to be intrinsically interesting and readily intelligible to a large national audience, very little else matters. American characters are naturally preferred, but some of the most successful writers of stories for American audiences are British and some are German and French. If the characters are so drawn that Americans sympathize with them, the question of nationality may be waived.

(Continued on page 15)

The Coward Poet

By FRANKLIN P. ADAMS

I'VE tried and sweated, sweated and tried,
Yet far the cry, the gap how wide
From what I meant to what I've said,
From living thoughts to phrases dead,
From what I feel to what I say
To make a verbal holiday;
Nor have I had at any time
Courage to write except in rhyme,
Nor bravery to be unrefined,
For mine is but a little mind
That ties itself to a tiny art
Lest it should show a beating heart;
And so to facts I sham devotion
Lest I exhibit my emotion.

Forgive me for my rhyming prose,
And for the limits I impose
Upon my heart, upon my pen,
And curse me for a coward.
Amen.

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Keep the Home Fires Burning

SAVE AMERICA FIRST. How to Make Our Democracy Work. By Jerome Frank. New York: Harper & Brothers (a Story Press Book). 1938. $3.75.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

THE man who rode off in all directions had nothing on Mr. Frank, late of the AAA and now of the SEC. In this lengthy book he advances persuasive arguments in support of several highly important contentions, which in a loose way hang together. But a very loose way, so that you end with the impression that you have been reading half a dozen different essays printed for convenience in a single volume. Mr. Frank has been thinking hard in the seven years since he began this book, and the objective and emphasis of his thoughts have naturally shifted from time to time. Every time they shifted he made a fresh start on his book, pointing it in a different direction; and apparently most of the material of these various versions has been left in, with little editing. The book was written, he says, "in the interstices of an active law practice"; but his interstitial secretions seem to have flowed pretty freely. Most of his argument, in this reviewer's opinion, is thoroughly sound, and of great value; but he would have said more if he had written less.

Mr. Frank's major contentions are these: (1) Most of classical economics, whether conservative or Marxian (Marx can surely be rated a classic by now) is actually only a description of what happened in one country, England, over a period of a hundred and fifty years now ended, and in Mr. Frank's opinion unlikely to be repeated. (2) Even in that place and at that time, these things did not happen through any ineluctable logic of historical determinism, but largely as the result of a concurrence of accidents. Accident indeed plays a far larger part in all history than systematic historians, Marxians in particular, like to think. (3) Even if foreign trade happened to be a good thing for Victorian England, no large amount of it is necessary for a continental nation such as ours; and in the present state of the world, reliance on foreign trade for any considerable part of our national income would be disastrous. (4) What this country needs is to build up the purchasing power of the home market; toward which end Mr. Frank offers a rather novel scheme of coöperation, not only between government and business, but between business and business.

American economists, he argues, have based most of their "laws" on observations not of America but of Europe, and England in particular; they take what happened there in a peculiar period and call it "capitalism." Some of their laws, e.g. the importance of foreign markets as an outlet for surplus production (a doctrine which the Marxians have vastly embellished) fit countries on the continent of Europe too, because that continent is not integrated and no one of its nations can be self-sufficient. (Scallions to Field Marshal Goering.) But even England, with its vast empire as a market and a source of raw materials, finally found that the majestically automatic processes of classical economics no longer worked, and had to go back in 1932 to a modified form of what used to be called the mercantile system, and is now called autarky. Conventional economists, observing this reversion, call it an interlude in normal processes. Not at all, says Mr. Frank; it was the age of free

"We need little foreign trade if we can build up our home market." . . . (Photo by Ralph Young from "U. S. Camera, 1935"—Morrow.)

trade, when England was the workshop of the world, that was the interlude.

The followers of Smith and Ricardo (notably Marx) argue that things had to happen thus and so, that this is Nature's law. Wrong again, says Frank; England happened to have easily worked coal and iron deposits at the time of the first great industrial inventions, and a population that was already (thanks to improvements in medicine) outrunning its home-grown food supply; accidents of politics also helped in promoting the shift from a controlled economic system to free trade. Marxian determinism gives an emotional satisfaction to the tender-minded, who cannot stand the idea that life, individual or collective, is at the mercy of unpredictable chance; but the fact is that history knows no inexorable either-or dilemmas; "there is no universal, single, most important determinant"; accident and emotion and even, occasionally, the deliberate use of intelligence are among the factors in historical causation.

So what happened in Europe is no precedent for a rich and integrated continent such as ours; we need little foreign trade if we build up our home market. Many have worried about the dangers of dependence on imports; what bothers Frank is the danger in dependence on exports, which seldom bring in a lasting profit. (He has no objection to Secretary Hull's reciprocal trade treaties, because he does not think they will promote enough trade to make much difference.) Complete free trade would flood us with the products of the pauper labor of Europe (and Japan), as free trade between the states has led to the siphoning off of New England industries to the South where lower labor standards prevail. Other attempts at payment for exports presently break down; our export trade of the twenties, financed by foreign loans many of which are now in default, was in substance a huge PWA program of which Germany and Latin America got the benefit while the American investor (largely identical with the American taxpayer) footed the bills. Farm organizations in those years proposed tax subsidies to make possible the dumping of the farm surplus abroad; but if we must subsidize any market, says Frank, why not the home market rather than Europe? In any case, reliance on foreign trade under present world conditions is too risky. "The world is full of cancerous growths, and any country which needlessly permits itself to remain a part of that organism subjects itself to uncontrollable maladies."

All the foregoing seems to this reviewer (who believed it already) thoroughly sound and well argued. More skepticism may be provoked by Frank's tentative plan for building up America. You have got to start, he says, with certain facts; the great majority of Americans want to preserve both democracy and the profit system; and that system as we now have it is one in parts of which competition should and does function, while in other parts, notably in most of the key industries, there is only "monopolistic competition." This leads to "industrial sabotage"—cutting down the output and keeping up the price—a bad habit which farmers are beginning to learn from manufacturers. We must stop that—make the steel companies stop it as well as the farmers, produce more at lower prices, and increase the national income. If we see that the extra income is distributed where it is most needed (by reducing prices while maintaining wages) we can afford to let the upper brackets receive just as much income as they got in 1929. This for the sake of harmony. But the controllers of American industry (who seldom own much of it) would not be satisfied if they merely made as much money as they used to; what they want is power—over other people's property; they want it so

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badly that they might fight if a program for government ownership of key industries threatened to take it away from them, even while leaving them their income. So we ought to get them worked into the plan through an "interindustry council," working with and under the ultimate control of government; which thanks to that control would escape the evils of the Italian corporative state or the German cartel system.

All this sounds like lovely work if you can get it. But it implies more intelligence (or at least more sureness in grasp of detail) in government than has lately been displayed, and more intelligence and public spirit among the leaders of business and finance. Mr. Frank entitles his last chapter, "How Much Can the Old Guard Learn?" but he never answers his own question; all he can say is that there is plenty they ought to learn. One can agree with that and still see little evidence that they are learning.

The author says that if he had had room he would have appended outlines for three kinds of reviews of his book—one by conservatives, one by radicals, and one by pedants. If this classification is inclusive the present reviewer doubtless belongs in the third group, and hence may offer some pedantic comments. Mr. Frank is zealous for the correct use of words, "the overthrow of the dictatorship of the vocabulary"; yet he speaks of "an agenda" and spells autarky "autarchy"—an error common enough, but seriously misleading. His book is full of lengthy citations; but he seldom identifies the source and not always even the author; and (as Mencken would say) he sadly lacks an index.

All this is overflow, however, in a generally sound book. Mr. Frank has such good ideas to sell that it is a pity he did not do a better job of window-dressing.

The Most Eastern of Western Nations

TOWNS AND PEOPLE OF MODERN POLAND. By Robert Medill McBride. New York: Robert M. McBride & Company. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by HENRY C. WOLFE

TO many Americans, Poland is a vague land of consonantal names, near-arctic winters, great artists, and strange foods and dances. The real Poland, the nation which has made such valuable contributions to history, is almost a terra incognita. For that reason Mr. McBride's volume should go a long way toward acquainting American readers with the most eastern of Western nations.

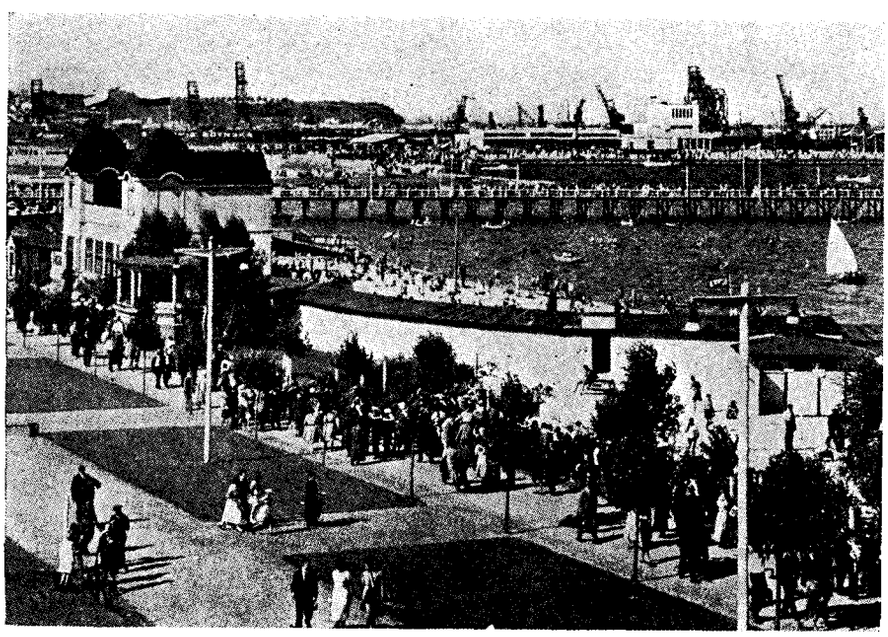
Although this is not a political book, it provides the student of politics with the historical background of Poland's role in the European political drama. It furnishes, too, an approach to Polish national psychology. For it is a balanced, dispassionate description of a resurgent nation that is becoming more and more important in the councils of Europe. Fifth in size and population on the continent, the Republic of Poland is "a state to be reckoned with."

Mr. McBride writes vigorously, lucidly, entertainingly. Beginning his story with Poland's new "miracle" maritime city of Gdynia, constructed in twelve years on the site of a fishing village, he takes the reader on a tour of ancient Poland. Warsaw, Wilno, Cracow, Lvov, and other landmarks of Polish history are on the itinerary. There are frequent side trips into unusual places. One of these is the Fukier cellars on the Old Town square in Warsaw. In its vaulted caverns are stored wines of "incredible rarity; we discovered old Tokay of 1601 and Polish mead of 1764, both specialties of the house."

The account of the wars that devastated Poland century after century may well cause the reader to wonder that any people could survive countless invasions by Turk, Tartar, Mongol, Teuton, and Slav. Whether they were turning back the Tartars at Cracow, or saving beleaguered Vienna from the Turks, Polish soldiers were standing between the then barbaric East and the civilized West.

Mr. McBride's reminder that while a united Poland remained free and withstood all enemies, a Poland torn by internecine strife succumbed, should be kept in mind not only by Poles but all peoples who cherish their freedom. The book has many illustrations and maps and an excellent index. It belongs in the travel equipment of all American visitors to Poland.

Henry C. Wolfe, author of "The German Octopus," has traveled widely in Europe and knows Poland at first hand.



"Poland's new 'miracle' city of Gdynia, constructed in twelve years on the site of a fishing village." (From "Towns and People of Modern Poland.")

An Engineer's History

MASTER BUILDERS OF SIXTY CENTURIES. By John Anderson Miller. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by JOHN RIORDAN

THE theme of this book may be roughly stated as the story of recorded history through civil engineering eyes. Mr. Miller has made a compendium of the great engineering structures, roads, buildings, walls, and dams, of remote and recent history, with particular emphasis on modes and materials of construction. He includes four of the seven wonders of the ancient world—the pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Diana of Ephesus, and the Pharos of Alexandria—as well as, to mention only the more prominent, the Great Wall of China, and the Colosseum at Rome. The information available being scanty, we are obliged to be content with a rough, informal account limited to a matter-of-fact view of what the structures were or seem to have been.

The structures are treated chapter by chapter in roughly chronological order and with little connection with each other, aside from the continuity of technical growth. The result for the most part is desultory reading; only in the more modern sections, the dykes of Holland and the laying of the transatlantic cable, does the pace quicken and the blood in the builders begin to run. Mr. Miller seems to be hampered by lack of a theme; though his story is clearly and concisely told, his knowledge unexceptionable, except in the instances mentioned he cannot make you read.

The book is attractively made and the drawings by Chichi Lasley are effective.

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Out of Old Chicago

MAY FLAVIN. By Myron Brinig. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by JAMES GRAY

IN a contest based on popularity with the general public, Myron Brinig's character, May Flavin, would be sure to win a place on the All-American Mother team. The book to which she gives her name as title has the sort of blatant exuberance and racy eventfulness that makes for easy reading. With a generous and uncritical enthusiasm, Mr. Brinig has mixed sentimentality and lustiness in just the right proportion to satisfy the demands of the literature of tough tenderness.

May Flavin is a red-haired, snub-nosed, impudent product of the Chicago slums. An Irish background makes her tongue sympathetic to the flavorsome quality of any vernacular. Her full command of the bluff American idiom gives her the edge on all comers in the verbal conflicts that mark the crises of her life. From her first appearance, as a worldly ingenue, to the last, as petted mother of a screen star, the pattern of her character remains the same. She is always ready for the next duty, whether it be helping her husband run a Bowery newsstand, scrubbing floors to support her children, or throwing a drunken, panic-stricken son into a bathtub to sober him up for a crucial moment in his career before the camera. Indestructible vitality and adaptable competence are the assets out of which she creates, from unpromising materials, a livable life.

The crises of May's career as a mother are many and vividly melodramatic. Her husband becomes involved in a brawl over a prostitute and disappears. May takes up his duties. Stanley tries to protect the gambler for whom he acts as bodyguard and is shot to death. Selma has a nearly tragic amorous misadventure. Sean is reported "missing" in the World War. May meets the impact of each catastrophe with resolution and faith. Her other children are less troublesome. Ruth becomes a priggish schoolteacher, preoccupied with the uses of the subjunctive. Lily enters a convent. Queenie rises to immense popularity on the stage, with the safely-returned Sean as partner. May has met the enemy, fate, and conquered.

Such lively material cannot fail to be popular. But Mr. Brinig has deliberately thrown away a fine opportunity by keeping his story always on a superficial level. May's beauty is not even skin-deep; it is only theatrical-make-up-deep. She seems never like anything more than a skillfully manipulated stock figure out of rags-to-riches drama. When she squares off for one of her tirades, the baby-spot seems to be playing on her from the wings. Her relationship to the children is never deeply investigated. Many of the scenes are shamelessly lush in their sentimentality. When May goes to the prostitute to ask for the return of her husband, the two women swoon incredibly into each other's arms. (Says the prostitute: "I don't know why I'm telling you all this except maybe any woman who'll go out an' buy a flower is a friend o' mine.") May's meditations over the body of her dead son become mixed in her mind with phrases out of a popular song.

As May's story moves on from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, there are many sidelong glances at the national scene. But they are hasty, careless, irrelevant. What Mr. Brinig has wanted to do (and done) is to write a detailed moving picture scenario on the outmoded formula: out of squalor into splendor, under American skies. It is all quaintly old-fashioned and it will be liked for old times' sake.

From Comedy to Pity

SOUTHWAYS. By Erskine Caldwell. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

THE time has come to worry about Erskine Caldwell. He was safe as long as the so-called forces of righteousness were trying to save the American reader from the contamination of his American writing. But queerly and increasingly, in the midst of tales which the conventional American moralist would never approve, he seems to be becoming, in more and more conventional and sentimental form, an American moralist himself. There may have been always a will to expose and reform behind the cackling laughter he evoked out of the Southern lower depths, but it was unobtrusive in stout native comedy which was excellent for its own sake. If Caldwell began as one of the later day Abolitionists (which I doubt), he was a rare exception to their screaming solemnity. But now, though in this book much comedy remains, fresh as stories told about the gin house door, five of the last six stories in the new collection are perilously close to that deliberate stirring of pity for a purpose which is permissible in preachers but is scarcely a basis for such a substantial reputation as properly belongs to Caldwell.

Of course, comedy remains among these stories. From old Governor Gil who decided to marry his tenant's young hellcat of a daughter to Gus Richards who came home once a year or so to fuss with his wife and tear up her chairs, Mr. Caldwell has made in his excellent and apparently effortless characterization a whole gallery of folk who stir a laughter which not only amuses but disturbs. But when Mr. Caldwell writes of young people, boy and girl, man and woman caught in love and hunger at the same time, it seems to me that his implicit demand for economic improvement takes the art form and the art attitude used by backwoods evangelists in shaping anecdotes aimed at eliminating sin. Mr. Caldwell makes sound laughter, but when he turns deliberately heart-rending, in my case at least he makes no tears at all.

Margaret Bourke-White

Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White when they toured the South, collaborating on "You Have Seen Their Faces."

But if a new solemnity is slipping into his writing, there is in it no loss of veracity in the people about whom he writes. They rise in Georgia as indigenous as a Georgia hill. That they are Southern folk, clearly, honestly, and vividly drawn, is certain; but that their doings are "Southways," as a Southern patriot I presume to doubt. The pitiful and the peculiar, the greedy and the hungry and the lustful and the ridiculous had shaped stories in a wide, sometimes weird world long before Mr. Caldwell opened his on the too many insanities and injustices of the South. This South is a strange land, but so are all lands strange and readers and writers are sometimes as queer as the far folk they put in or take out of books. Southways in general are the ways of the world.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

GEORGE STEVENS..... Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART..... Publisher
AMY LOVEMAN..... Associate Editor
HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT, CHRISTOPHER MORLEY } Contributing Editors

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Lament for the British Novel

IT was about twenty years ago that Virginia Woolf wrote "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," which put realism in its place, defined its limitations, and implied that a new generation was coming along to explore at least certain sections of those vast territories which Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells overlooked. Now in 1938 comes Storm Jameson with a very interesting if gloomy essay, "The Novel in Contemporary Life,"* which unpretentiously but firmly puts another generation of British novelists in their place. It is not news, in fact it has long been obvious, that English fiction is suffering from a vitamin deficiency; but Miss Jameson provides a documentary diagnosis which is impressive, and which will leave its readers more than ever convinced that the English novel was better off under Bennett, Galsworthy, Wells, Conrad, and Maugham in his prime, than it is now under Walpole and Priestley.

The promising novelists of the twenties have disappeared. Perhaps Miss Jameson overestimates the "defeat" of Virginia Woolf's artistry; but even those who admired "The Years" when it was published will agree that it conveys "a sense of deadness, of falsity. These people give back a hollow tone when Mrs. Woolf touches them, because they are hollow." And certainly no one will deny that D. H. Lawrence, even before his death, was writing too much; that E. M. Forster has produced no fiction since 1924; that Aldous Huxley has undergone a metamorphosis from a first-rate novelist into a third-rate metaphysician. These are the four writers who dominated English fiction in the twenties, and whose abdication leaves the landscape barren. So observes Miss Jameson; the only one of her contemporaries for whom she can say very much is A. J. Cronin; and she does not see that the younger generation is getting anywhere in particular.

Miss Jameson gives two explanations for all this. In the first place, she puts it on the basis of commercial pressure. "Bad money drives out good; bad novels, warranted not to disturb . . . drive out the others." The second explanation is the intellectual climate: propaganda, pressure-groups, and above all, the indigestible confusion of contemporary life.

None of this is unfamiliar, but Miss Jameson has admirably summed up many current ideas about fiction which have been in the air, or isolated here and there in print. The first part of her explanation, as it relates to commercial pressure, is conventional but unconvincing. Certainly none of the novelists she mentions has failed to secure a large and lasting popular following. In the reprints and in public libraries, "Mrs. Dalloway" and "Sons and Lovers" and "Point Counterpoint" are all very much in demand, to this day. Mrs. Woolf's "The Years," whatever its shortcomings, was not a potboiler, it made no concessions to the public, but it has been one of her most successful novels on both sides of the Atlantic. There is no evidence that the public has deserted good novels for commercial literary entertainment: the two have long existed side by side, and continue to do so. On the contrary, all the evidence, by Miss Jameson's own showing, is that too many of the best English novelists have deserted the fiction-reading public.

The other explanation, that of the intellectual climate, undoubtedly has something in it; the trouble with it is that it is too vague to be useful, to be more than suggestive. The intellectual climate when E. M. Forster wrote his last novel, in 1924, was quite different from that of 1935, when Aldous Huxley wrote the famous pacifist manifesto which concludes "Eyeless in Gaza." However, Miss Jameson's essay suggests a point which it does not make. Her grouping of Forster, Lawrence, Huxley, and Mrs. Woolf raises the question of what, with all their differences, they had in common; and probably the answer is that they had in common, more than anything else, a feeling for the subtleties of human relationships. These four writers are psychological novelists who explored the individual not primarily in relation to the universe or to society, but in relation to other individuals; the larger implications of man in society were adumbrated in personal relationships. And the theme of personal relationships is what is most conspicuously lacking in the novels of the thirties. Not that human relationships could disappear from fiction; no novel can exist without them; but the emphasis has shifted. The individual has shrunk during the last ten years. His personality, his individuality, has been undergoing a barrage from every side, and even in the democracies he is not regarded as having the same importance he used to have, by politicians or by novelists.

Not only in England, but in America too. Where personal relationships come into a novel nowadays, it is apt to be on the level of boy-meets-girl. This is not a level on which a big novel is likely to be produced. (Anyone who wants to refresh his memory of a big novel made out of personal relationships should reread "A Passage to India"; it does not date.) But if in America there has not been a significant novel of personal relationships since—say—Ellen Glasgow's "The Sheltered Life," nevertheless no one feels that the vitality of American fiction has been reduced. Historical novelists have taken up the slack, and along with them regional novelists, plus a few individual writers like Steinbeck and Faulkner, Dos Passos and Farrell, who touch one or the other of these classifications without falling into them.

Possibly from this distance it is difficult to see what is going on in England; but it does look as though the superior vitality of the American novel at present might have something to do with the absence from the English scene of any good historical or regional novelists. They exist in the colonies—for instance, G. B. Lancaster and Stuart Cloete; but the only recent historical fiction we can think of off-hand, written by an Englishman, is the insipid series by Hugh Walpole on the Herries family. And as for regionalists, has there been one since Hardy, except Sheila Kaye-Smith, whose name you can remember, and in whose dialect you do not quickly bog down? Where the Americans of the thirties have been rediscovering the Civil War, the Revolution, and the Lewis and Clark expedition, English novelists, in so far as they have trended toward anything, have been rewriting their family histories, from the accession of Queen Victoria to the present. These novels are only distantly related to historical fiction; and human relationships in them are conventional and minor. And in any case none of the Doris Leslies or Naomi Jacobs has, to date, improved upon "The Forsyte Saga."

However, historical novels do not blanket the field of fiction; if English fiction is suffering from a lack of historical novels, that is a symptom that it is suffering still more from a lack of novels about individuals—from a lack of significant characters. The same deficiency will be evident here as soon as the wave of historical novels subsides, or as soon as the public gets tired of reading them. Fiction ultimately cannot exist without significant characters, i.e., without a consciousness of the importance of individuals. It may have to be a belligerent consciousness, in the current intellectual atmosphere; but it is up to the novelists to make their own impression on the intellectual atmosphere. It is up to the novelists to reëstablish the individual. If they do not, they will sooner or later stop writing novels. That seems to be the point —though she does not say it—of Miss Jameson's excellent essay.

*Boston: The Writer. 1938. 75 cents.

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Letters to the Editor: *The Corporate Style; Pictorial History*

Matter of Opinion

SIR:—It occurs to me that your estimate of the "excellent and individual English" written after hours by the gentlemen mentioned in "The Corporate Style" is as much a matter of opinion as Mr. Josephson's judgment of their work in harness. Of greater importance is the exposure of readers to this grammatical vertigo. Remember you Fra Elbertus and his scriveners?

As this reaches you I shall be on my way to my native Bloomington, the present home of Harold Sinclair, author of "American Years." As each such annual fortnight restores me to America I realize anew that this holus bolus is endemic to New York, but the other fifty weeks become increasingly hard to take.

GERVAISE BUTLER.

New York City

The point was that the English written after hours by the gentlemen mentioned in "The Corporate Style" is their own English, not the corporation's. "Excellent" is admittedly a matter of opinion. As to the exposure of readers, that's up to the readers.—Ed.

Literary Sailor

SIR:—Mr. Irwin Edman's "The Man Who Didn't Want to Be a Writer" brings back to my mind a likewise literary-minded sailor I met a few years ago. He is the only person I am ever likely to meet who read "Anthony Adverse" standing up. At the time of the book's currency, he was on a lengthy voyage on a submarine. Submarines have a dearth of comfortable places to sit down, so he read it standing, with the book and his elbows on an upper bunk. That, I submit, is fortitude.

CLIFFORD ORR.

New York City

Arrivals and Departures

SIR:—A current story in pictures impels me to invite your readers' attention to the literary potentiality of pictorial document. An exhibition at the New York Public Library's Picture Collection on "Arrivals and Departures" draws one's mind, in widening circles of awareness, to speculation on man's history as a continuity of entrances and exits, of goings and comings.

In a pictorial flashing back and forth through time, from the Old Testament to the latest news broadcast, a sense of this drama is given through the work of painter and sculptor, illustrator and photographer.

Here Icarus strains to meet the flaming sun, the first of man's recorded departures on wings. One realizes that the human race has always sought to soar against the sky, remembers the prophetic designs of Leonardo's air machines, returns to a photograph of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, pauses as the *Hindenburg* moves toward her mooring mast a split ominous second before the blast of extinction.

From Masaccio's painting of the irrevocable expulsion of Adam and Eve, to the ironic candid camera close-up of a family dispossessed on a city street, there is shown an epitome of the flights and migrations of mankind. Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt. Eternally Lot's wife looks back at burning Sodom. On the road of ages Jews are expelled from Spain; out of new lands of terror stream refugees of new wars and revolutions.

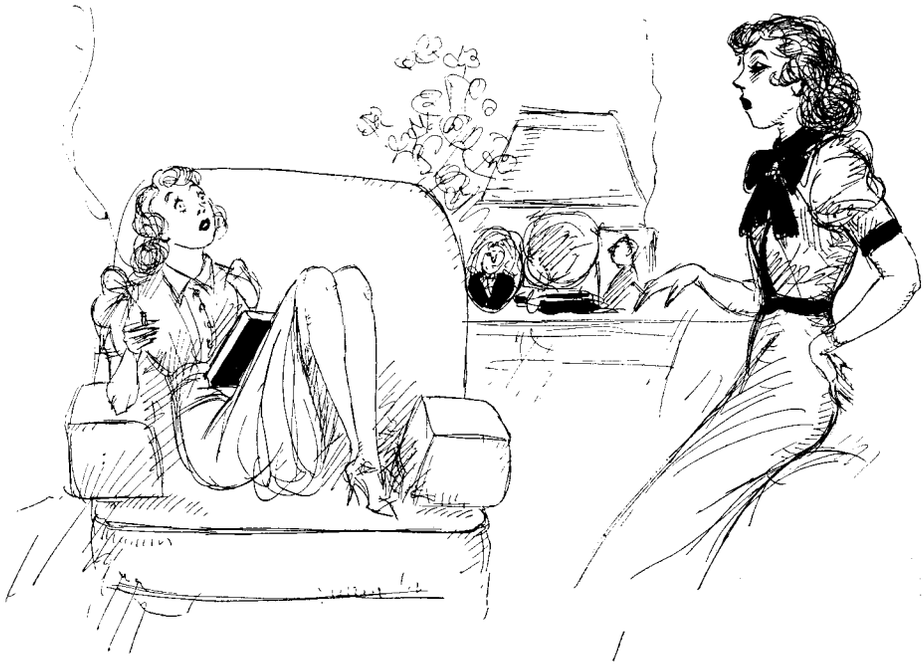
Captains and kings depart. A Solomon greets the Queen of Sheba; Joseph welcomes his brethren; the Magi approach; Edward descends a gangplank; Hitler marches over Vienna. But these are not only of kings and emperors and generals and dictators. We see pictured the prodigal son's return; a soldier's farewell; the steerage interior of a ship bound for America.

From going to and fro, through the dimensions of time and space, known and imagined, pass the arrivals and departures. Noah's Ark arrives to the stilled waters. The Pied Piper of Hamelin leads his procession out into beguiling visions. Alice drops down a rabbit hole. A whale voids Jonah. Columbus takes leave of Isabella, a ship drops anchor in old New Amsterdam.

Day departs, night arrives; a geometric pattern of street cars and people bound for work in mines, in fields, in shops; pictures of factory whistles, time clocks, subway straps. Beyond the end of the city a ferryboat slips out, a gray departure into a quiet river. Night will pass, day will return. A Spanish soldier entrains for Teruel. He clasps his child in leavetaking. A fellow soldier gazes alone into inscrutable space. In this final photograph there is all the essence of death and leavetaking, farewell and departure, the horror of ultimate desolation and destruction. A going forward to something unknown and new that is the end of departure, the prologue to arrival.

J. ANTRO.

New York City



"Either this book isn't very original, or else I've read it before."

Friendly Note to a Recent Contributor

You may write your Footnotes for Reviewers,
Sit in judgment or pridefully sing;
But for heaven's sake look up your English,
And don't say *this sort of a thing!*

CAROLYN WELLS.

New York City

"Master Kung" Again

SIR:—In spite of the faint praise and urbane condemnation which most reviewers meted out to Carl Crow's "Master Kung," I bought the book, read it, and enjoyed it. Mr. K. S. Latourette, who reviewed "Master Kung" for *S. R. L.* will probably be criticized by Mr. Naive Layman for his case against Mr. Crow. This should not be. Mr. Latourette is a scholar. And he is a magnanimous one at that. (A characteristic which I think must be peculiar to him.) He can write with astounding sincerity such things as, "Mr. Crow has presented in unforgettable fashion Confucius as *he* (Italics mine) understands him." I think as a scholar's opinion of a popularizer's book that is beautiful!

Of course from that point on Mr. Latourette mildly sets out to prove that Mr. Crow has "peppered" his pages with errors of fact, but as an honest scholar he can do no less. Altogether he was very fair with "Master Kung," and if there is any criticism of Mr. Latourette for his review I hope it will be as moderate and kind as his review.

WILLIAM K. DE ROOS.

Oakdale, Iowa

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America Four-Corners

A Review of *The Congressional Record*

BY LOVELL THOMPSON

"If you could make a composite of all the cartoons . . . ever drawn of Congress, you would find that they added up to a countryman" . . . (From a cartoon by Harper in the *Birmingham Age-Herald*.)

IF you could make a composite of all the cartoons that Americans have ever drawn of Congress, you would find that they added up to a countryman. The next thing about this cartoonist's composite congressman is that he is likely to be small, likely to have a chin beard, and likely to bear the same relation to Uncle Sam that Sancho Panza bears to Don Quixote. He may wear the shabby coat of state and the black stetson of the South and look like a village undertaker; or he may wear the shirt-sleeves of the North and look like a man you can bribe in an honest cause; but either way he looks slovenly. His seat is an upturned keg of nails in the back of a cross-roads store. He is a hick and a solon and a babe that aged in the wood. Gas stations have sprung up at America's four-corners, transcontinental planes fly over them; but still we find this country uncle of our childhood somewhere round the cross-roads, prophesying judgment over a game of checkers.

A real composite congressman would not look like this. He might look like a Rotarian; he would not look like a last year's bumpkin. Why is it, then, that the cartoonist's idyll is so satisfying? It seems as if the answer might be that the cartoonists are right; and that beneath the Rotarian façade lies the heart of a hick. Rip Van Winkle shaved is Rip Van Winkle just the same.

In any case, the idea should not be hard to test, for the heart of Congress lies flamboyantly exposed. This country uncle of ours keeps a profoundly moving diary of his daily irregularities—that no one can read. The leaves that cover the babes in the wood are the leaves of *The Congressional Record*.

One of the reasons why you can't read the *Record* is that the Senate generally sits more than half a year, can go on record more than twice as fast as a man can read, and has a hundred years start on most of us. However, the amazing thing is that you can't read even a good big part of the *Record*—let alone all of it. Few secret chambers have more privacy than has been given to Congress by the government typographers. The *Record* has the look of the last century in its style, and in the attempt to make it cheap enough for all to buy it has been made difficult for most to read. He who travels in the *Record* is soon exhausted by the endless gray desert. His throat is parched by the dust of woodpulp. His rescuer will find him misled by mirages and fallen by the shore of an old dream.

Yet the *Record* is not dull. It is America's longest story and greatest collection of character sketches. It is a network of real issues; the most human of human documents. It is the corpus delicti of democracy. It is a slow-motion picture of progress, in which progress is growth; growth is age; and age is death. It can be intensely exciting. Under favorable circumstances it can even be read.

The best way to approach the record is to follow the news of Congress in the press and pick a day that promises intense debate. Pick, for example, Friday, April 8th. That was the day on which the House voted down the President's reorganization bill. Next morning Congress was headline news all over the country. Read the *Record* of this day and no other. If that does not expose the heart of Congress and provide an explanation of its Rip Van Winkle quality, then nothing can.

On April 8th the Senate met earlier than the House—at eleven o'clock. The meeting in the Capitol, like the meeting round the checkerboard, begins with kind routine civilities. Round the checkerboard, it is an inquiry for Si's sick cow or Jake's sick wife. In the Senate, it is memorial observations, committee reports, and petitions for legislation.

He who reads the *Record* will see that though personal intrigue, off-stage lobbying, and log-rolling, special incapacities, and casual breaks are the sparkling chips from which the great mosaic of congressional debate is made, they are important not in themselves but only as parts of the large pattern. The *Record* dwarfs its elements in the breadth of its implications and in the profound strength of its sluggish animation.

It is the *Record* which we pursue then. In it personalities take shape and almost shake your hand. Homely words and autobiographic phrases build clear pictures of those who talk the most. "I have watched these grain markets," says Senator Fraser, "because all my life I have lived on a farm and raised wheat." Senator Hale—the voice of Maine—says that he will not offer the amendment he had "contemplated to offer." Childhood errors hold out in the midst of finished periods. Senator Harrison says "Equally as well," and that seems to tell us something about the color of his overcoat and backs up his outlook on cotton taxes.

Of course the most impressive thing about the *Record* is its length. On April 8th the *Record* of the talk at America Four-Corners runs to about 150,000 words. At that gait, and it's not an unusual speed for them, this club of Rip Van Winkles talks at the rate of about two "Gone-with-the-Winds" a week—one for the Senate and one for the House. The talk in the two Houses of Congress is remarkably good. At the county cross-roads round the checkerboard the speech is full of quick sense and hard countryman's wit. Such talk as this is the wild stock of senatorial debate. The discussion in the Senate suffers from the weaknesses of domestication. It is more showy and less aromatic than its wild brother. Yet it has quality none the less. To think of half a thousand men engaged on a seven-months' debating marathon, and quality debate at that, is to find the flaw in Congress. It must be first and foremost a bunch of virtuosos, a rink full of fancy skaters, cutting pigeon's wings.

Thus it happens that the Senate habitually makes that mistake that the dormouse made, about breathing when he slept being the same as sleeping when

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he breathed. Though you discuss when you legislate, that does not mean that you legislate when you discuss. A man is made by his trade. Any trade fosters a habit of mind which becomes inescapable. The circle of seers at the county cross-roads and also the men at America Four-Corners are trained to talk, so talking is the end, and action need not follow. Just here is a second step in the undoing of the babes that age in the wood.

The *Record* is full of phrases like these:

> Ill-considered legislation should not be passed.
>
> The Committee thought it was better to get the judgment of some other persons concerning this proposal, and not delay the revenue bill by discussion which *we knew would be prolonged* and which the discussion indulged in *today has shown will be prolonged.*
>
> Completely as I agree . . . I am unable to say upon the basis of any information I have been able to obtain in the course of *two years' study* what the contingent reserve ought to be.

Under this sort of scrutiny bills must lag and things remain matters of theory to Congress long after they are fact to the rest of the world. Here is an occupational unwillingness to give legal recognition to conditions less than a score of years old. That is what gives to Congress its Rip Van Winkle quality. Thus the reader of the diary of old Rip finds him rubbing his eyes in the face of facts and full of the fearful disapproval of the man on horseback which the man on the keg of nails must always feel.

County cross-road or national four-corners, the talk is mostly shop. The speakers feel at home. The discussion is not empty but energetic, full of the effort to convey ideas and win onlookers. The reality and intimacy of the *Record* are what leap out. He who reads it sits in democracy's kitchen and listens to her servants discuss her.

The shop talk of legislators is varied. On the 8th the Senate discussed the following subjects: taxes on liquor, the regulation of grain market speculators, the working of an old income-tax law in the Philippines, how to account inventories for the purposes of taxation, duties on Canadian lumber and the conservation of American timber of certain types, federal protection for dry states, tariff equalization fees (a kind of processing tax), reduction of social security taxes, the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Swedish people in this country, and one or two other matters.

On seven of these subjects Senator Harrison spoke with authority, and several senators participated to a large degree in the discussion of as many as two or three. This means much special knowledge for those who speak as well as the long day's grind of listening. A catalogue of the subjects Congress has to cover makes it look like the bottle-neck of progress.

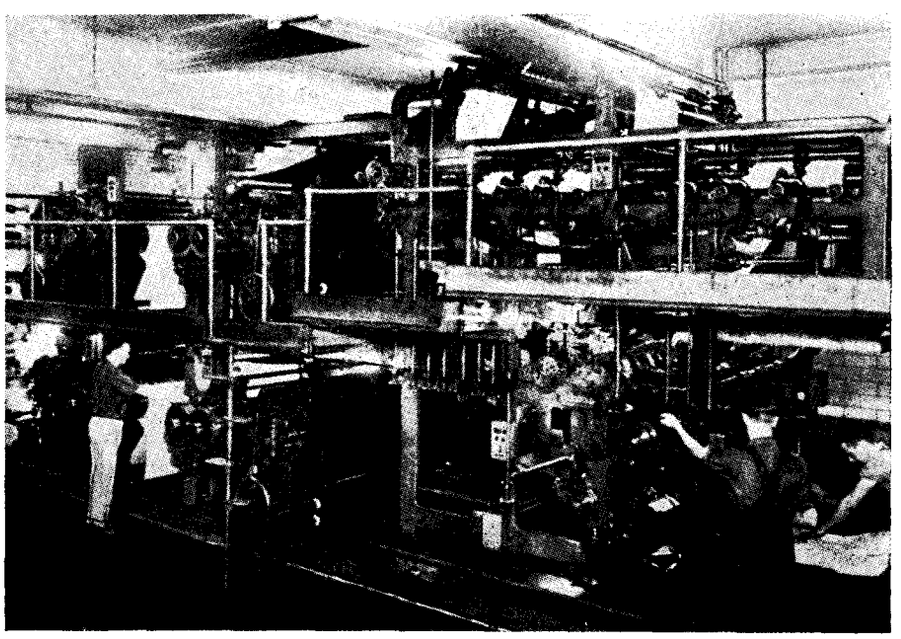
Consider now the implication of such phrases as these: "I did not *have time* to figure it out but the increased tax undoubtedly would bring in a little revenue"; or again, "We should not adopt such an amendment *without an opportunity for full consideration.*" "I realize the Senator from Mississippi *desires to get through* with the bill tonight if possible. . . . I do, however, wish to *take sufficient time* to explain." The pressing problem of democracy is to keep the laws abreast of the facts. The *Record* of April 8 is sweated over with signs of strain which result from the effort to do that. These are men trying to be right and not seeing that to wait for certainty is to be too late. The babes in the wood can't hold the pace. They are hot, they are just, they are pungent and pointed and mellow; they see all, know all, tell all except that they are licked—and who wouldn't be? That seems to be the simple lesson that the book of April 8th has to teach.

On the same day, the House provided a classic example of the weakness set forth in the debate of the Senate. It was a day of consideration of the President's reorganization bill. But before this consideration of reorganization, like a one-reel comic before a feature, came Mr. Grey of Indiana, who rose—like a trout—"to a point of very high personal privilege." To wit, Eccles has said that the bonus bill had helped to cause the present depression and Grey is aware of having helped to cause the bonus bill and seems to be afraid his district will hold him responsible.

As if to illustrate the impotency of the House before their sacred laws of debate, Grey like an escaped pin-wheel ranted on for four columns and fizzled out. Debate on the day's main issue—the government reorganization bill—was opened at last. "Merely a bill . . . to do that very thing that any sensible business executive . . . would have done long ago—we voted for it here time and time again. We voted for a bill more drastic . . ." So speaks Bankhead while the party of the President tries all its strength in its attempt to move the House. The hubbub of battle rises expressively out of the *Record*. The President's party yields on amendment after amendment. The original bill is shorn of ears and even limbs; every chance is taken to bring it through alive. The *Record* tells you that Charley West in the House lunch room is boasting that he has changed twenty votes. It tells you that Farley is calling members on the phone. In the midst of debate you hear suddenly above the heat of battle Representative Stack defending his brogue, "the only thing he has left from lovely Erin." You hear the pounding of the gavel at merciless twenty-minute intervals, you envisage the clerk mumbling amendments—they are in 8-point type—you hear Ramspeck yield to Randolph and Randolph to McSweeny.

The day grows older, the *Record* moves faster: "On page 62, strike out administration and insert Commission . . . . the gentleman from New York may, in his stupid way, laugh . . . . I move the committee do now rise . . . . the motion was rejected . . . . I do not claim that Franklin D. Roosevelt is a demigod . . . . what you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say . . . . on page 60, line 11, strike out 401 and insert 402 . . . . contine the fight to defeat this and all other bills signed sincerely blank . . . . Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition . . . . Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit . . . . Mr. Speaker, I ask for the yeas and the nays . . . . the yeas and the nays were ordered . . . . yeas 204, nays 193 . . . ."

The House had voted, significantly, to



"Few secret chambers have more privacy than has been given to Congress by the government typographers." Press on which *The Congressional Record* is printed: photo from "A Visit to the World's Greatest Printing Plant."

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recommit. They did not give death to the bill—there was no real action—only so far as the bill was concerned a kind of fatal third degree. Another bill, good or bad, already passed in other forms essentially intended to authorize an existing situation, is for the moment anyway smothered. Congress drops behind another lap.

The Rip Van Winkles round the checkerboard wonder what the world is coming to. They prepare to pass laws authorizing the day of judgment after it shall have taken place. The babes age on in the wood passing lavender-scented laws, nostalgic, elaborate, tenderly regulating the cyclones of the last century.

So the book of the eighth of April is a tragedy, for us more acute, more moving than any other—acute because it is unread, its threat unheeded, moving because the tragedy is ours and incomplete. It is the tragedy of America Four-Corners.

Can America Stay Out?

THE UNITED STATES IN WORLD AFFAIRS, 1937. By Whitney Shepardson in Collaboration with William O. Scroggs. New York: Published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper & Brothers. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by DAVID H. POPPER

STUDENTS of American foreign policy have learned, from the five volumes previously published under this title by the Council on Foreign Relations, to expect a high standard of conciseness, accuracy, and style in this annual survey. They will not be disappointed in the study for 1937.

For obvious reasons the authors have centered their attention on a few dominant tendencies. They note the retreat of the great democracies—the United States included—before the drive by Germany, Italy, and Japan for power and dominion. They foresee the possibility that the formula of parallel action developed by Secretary Hull in connection with the Far Eastern conflict may evolve into a common front of the liberal capitalist states. They portray the growing American distaste for involvement in the suicidal squabbles of a dying Europe, and its embodiment in law through passage of the Neutrality Act. They ponder the implications of furious rearmament and gently deprecate the effectiveness of trade agreements and other economic measures designed to improve the prospects for world peace. They outline the tribulations encountered by the State Department in applying the Good Neighbor policy and the Monroe Doctrine, when Mexico confiscates foreign properties and fascist powers dabble in Latin American revolutions. And finally, shifting their ground to the Far East, they trace with apparent approval the development of a strong anti-Japanese policy.

Through all of this, like a basic leitmotif, runs one insistent question: can the United States remain aloof from the impending world struggle, and should it attempt to do so? Beneath their thin mantle of objectivity, the authors are obviously inclined to answer in the negative. To a proponent of what is loosely called the isolationist thesis, their analysis of our neutrality legislation and its less than wholehearted application by the Roosevelt administration will seem at many points unsympathetic, and at some points perhaps unfair. Phrases like "scuttle and run" and "hamstringing the President in his dealings with foreign nations" are polemic, not objective. They refer to an unwillingness to engage a whole nation in war in defense of a few persons and their property in foreign lands, and to a desire to provide, if possible, some democratic check on the ability of the executive to edge the nation into foreign wars. Certainly there are flaws aplenty in the Neutrality Act and the proposed Ludlow amendment. It is a fearfully difficult task to build barriers against involvement in European or Asiatic conflicts. But we may legitimately doubt whether the Roosevelt Administration's policy of defending our imperialist interests in the Far East under a cloak of glittering moral preachment offers a fruitful alternative. For this side of the story of American foreign relations in 1937 readers would do well to glance at Hubert Herring's little book "And So to War"—a powerful mental stimulant and a useful complement to "The United States in World Affairs."

In the Black Forest

THIRD CLASS TICKET TO HEAVEN. By Helen Follett. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by HASSOLDT DAVIS

RARELY, we feel, has any old, dark land been described with more sympathy and sensitiveness than has the Black Forest of Germany in this book by Helen Follett. It is not a proper travel book, nor is it a novel, though it has the qualities of both—the fresh and personal approach of a tale of travel in a legendary land, and a novel's structure: a purely factual narrative that builds through beauty to its tragic climax.

A Glade in the Black Forest

Helen Follett's third-class ticket took her from Grimm's fairy tales to the actual Hinterzarten in the Black Forest, a town just beyond another called Himmelreich—the Kingdom of Heaven—which was reached through the Höllental—Hell's Valley. She lived among the peasants in this extreme land, helping them make hay for a liter of milk and two eggs daily, eating their good Schwarzwald soup and substantial bread, attending their scant festivities. But there was little time for sociability among them; the needs of the earth and the threat of the weather forbade it. They moved grimly like a Danse Macabre to their fields and back to their three-hundred-year-old kitchens. A few among them would knife you for a pfennig, but most were kind to Helen Follett because she understood their truculence, and because, perhaps, she was a little mad to be writing a book in the Schwarzwald "Traumhütte," the Dream Hut, which she had rented from the dreamy noodle merchant.

The old folk lived only for their earth, but the younger generation, who had missed the war, were always climbing into the sunlight of the hills, and always laughing to punctuate their songs. So, too, was young Bill James, the American minstrel whose mind was "like a peddler's pack." The carver of cuckoo clocks could smile, and Aunt Amalia, over eighty, spat on her hands and grinned and still did the champion work in the fields.

The story concerns primarily Herr Paul Künstler, the noodle merchant, his sweetheart, and their dreams, so well embodied in the hut which Paul was accustomed to decorate with gay silk flags of original design, to save his soul from noodles. With Mrs. Follett they marched through the forest that had been enchanted since long before the writing of the brothers Grimm, and they taught her of mermaids and giants who once did wonders there, and of the true heart of the land. They shared their joy with her, until Paul's dreams came to a harrowing conclusion. Mrs. Follett has written splendidly this simple tale, balancing the beauty and terror of it, the grim and enraptured people, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Valley of Hell in the Schwarzwald hills.

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Long Stories Short

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Men You Haven't Heard Of

Chapter I

THERE was a man (you never heard of him) who couldn't work after lunch. In the morning he was full of good hope; his mind was busy, and usually by noon he had got himself into a decisive mood. Between twelve and one very likely he accomplished something. But then a bell rang, food was served, and his spirit fell drowsy.

It never occurred to him that it might be possible to do without lunch.

That's why you never heard of him.

Chapter II

There was another man who worked all the time. He got up early and worked before breakfast; he worked in the desperate hours of the afternoon when sunlight is beautiful and cruel; he worked while other people were having cocktails, and he worked late at night.

You never heard of him either.

Chapter III

But that's all right: most of us have heard of too many people already.

Song of Social Significance

—As sure as two and two make four.
—It's not sure at all. Sometimes two and two make nothing.
—How come?
—Plus two and minus two. Or try mixing two Scotch and two rye.

Nature Goes Nazi

Horticultural circles were startled when Mother Nature announced that she had suspended service on the Rose Loan issue due June 15.

Fiscal experts, consulted by our reporter, state that this is a complete rupture of *uberimma fides.*

International Aphids went up 5 points.

Inscription for a Chair

This chair we always saved for an honored guest. Not a gentleman born, he had all the instincts. He chose it himself, because it was in an inconspicuous corner, and for him it was kept. When he grew gouty with age, half blind under those shags of eyebrow, he lumbered there more often, though it cost him a sigh to settle between the padded arms. There he would doze, secure and unworrying, for many hours.

Still, after many years, this chair is held in his honor. I wonder if by sitting there I might learn something of his wisdom. But the simplest things are the hardest to come at. I keep here within reach some book for quiet study; one of those (for instance Lao-Tse) that contradict the world.

He was a great gentleman, we always say. It is the one phrase that suits him, though he was a sheepdog.

"If your heart is right," said some old presbyter, "all creatures will be for you a book of holy doctrine."

The Cream Jug

There was once a fat little silver cream jug, shiny as an author's elbow. It had been in the family for years and years. It had always been used for cream—or at least top-of-the-bottle. It was put on the table for morning coffee, and everyone was accustomed to find cream in it.

By and bye, for one reason or another, the best they could put in the fat little jug was Grade B.

But the old jug was so shiny and plump and traditional that even skim milk poured out of it still tasted something like cream. The milk looked thicker than it really was.

There are vitamins and calories that don't show up in a test-tube.

Even come the Revolution, keep your old dinner jacket.

It's the Humidity

It was a damp foul muggy morning, soon after rain. The air was close and thick, people rattled in raincoats, everyone looked sticky.

Suddenly, it was the exact mean of moisture, the perfect plastic between wet and dry, I saw that the whole paving of Fifth Avenue had been printed a clear herringbone pattern by tire-treads. It was like a broad rich cloth of tweed. I was enchanted and hurried to the office so I could tell someone about it.

The Autograph

Once there was an author, a Foreigner, who went on the road on a lecture trip. Everywhere he was asked for autographs. And although this was a fatigue, and even an embarrassment (for either to perform or to evade made him feel equally silly) he was of compliant disposition and tried to do what seemed expected. But he used to think anxiously of neuritis, for his hand was lame.

In one western city the autograph habit seemed to have reached its climax. Evidently someone—the ruthless lecture agent, or the publisher, or the committee of local dames—had pledged him to sign every book in town. Not only books that the audience might bring in, but even stock on demurrage in the shops. So after his talk, and a luncheon at the hotel, he was taken round to all the bookstores (so that no one might be offended) and dutifully wrote his name.

It happened to be rather a long name, but about the time he was wondering whether anyone knew that printing had been invented he was rescued by a genial parson who took him home to tea. Here the visitor learned (after two cups) that many of the congregation had sent their volumes to the rectory to be authenticated and most of the high school students had brought around their little albums. Presently he was called for to be taken to a cocktail party. After a day in which stress divided by strain had come close to an improper fraction (he had risen at dawn in another city to make his forenoon date) the relaxation of prime bourbon was indeed welcome. Before long he was autographing even before anyone asked it, and writing European folk-songs on the wallpaper.

But he was on an imperative schedule, arranged by the ruthless agent, and there was a train he must catch. Now there was just time for him to scour to the hotel where a room had been kindly reserved for him to bathe and change. His frolicsome hosts took him thither, handed him his key and goodbyes were said. Without even halting at the hotel desk he hastened upstairs to repair his privacies. And then, close upon train time, he realized that in the push of travel he had run through his pocket money and would need some for the railroad ticket. He must cash a travelers' cheque.

With his bag, and departure peremptory, he hurried to the cashier. He started to countersign the cheque. After so much exercise his hand had gone numb and he wrote with pain. How different it looked from the easy script of his carefree signature in New York a few weeks before. The cashier looked doubtfully at the paper.

"I'm very sorry," he said, "but it don't look quite kosher. I don't believe we can honor this."

"Lord help us," cried the visitor, or words to that effect, "if the signature's bad it's because I've been writing my name all afternoon."

"Are you registered here?" asked the cashier.

"I don't think I am," said the distracted guest. "Someone engaged a room for me to change in, but it must be in someone else's name; I didn't sign for it."

The cashier consulted an assistant manager. To him also the wretched Foreigner strove to explain. "Why," he said, "I wrote about a hundred autographs in the ballroom of this very hotel this morning and nobody questioned them."

The cashier and the assistant manager had both come on duty in the afternoon

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and what had happened that morning was no concern of theirs.

"We got into trouble with the express company not long ago," said the manager, "for accepting some phony signatures."

"Try again," suggested the room clerk, who had caught a strong effusion of bourbon from the guest. "Maybe you just had indigestion the first time."

After a terrified look at the clock our hero made another attempt; but nervousness and fatigue had now completely unstrung his members. The signature was worse than before and looked a palpable and clumsy forgery. The manager had half a mind to call the house detective, yet something pitiable in the stranger's demeanor appealed to his humanity.

"Isn't there anyone in town who can identify you?" he asked.

The irony of this, in the same hotel where he had been hailed that morning as wiser than Maeterlinck and funnier than Harry Lauder, did not just then appeal to the visitor. There was now about two minutes leeway. He gazed round the lobby and of course saw no one he knew. Indeed his various hosts and listeners were by now at their comfortable dinner tables, probably talking over his eccentricities and wondering why they had taken the trouble to drag along a book for an autograph.

"Call up Doctor Mansard," he cried feverishly, mentioning the cultured parson of the afternoon tea. "For God's sake hurry, I've got to catch the seven fifteen." Fearfully he remembered the deep and leisurely solemnity of Doctor Mansard's conversation.

But at that moment a beautiful creature in evening wraps came past the desk. Miracle: he recognized her, and she him. Under her arm she still carried the book he had signed for her in the heyday of his meridian.

"Why, Mr. Sansevieria!" she exclaimed. "Poor soul, what's wrong?"

Quick now; we must move fast. 20 seconds for him to explain; 20 seconds for her to show the cashier the untainted signature he had done earlier; 20 seconds for the manager to accept her assurance. 20 seconds more to count out the money, and 20 seconds to rush him to her car. She drove swiftly to the depot.

"I hope I didn't sound ill-humored," he said. "I really was desperate. I've been saying to myself, if I met a woman who didn't want an autograph I believe I'd fall in love with her. Caramba, I'd give her something better than an autograph."

They pulled up at the station just as the Katy whistled for the curve.

"I'd like you to know," she said, "I didn't ask it for myself. I only wanted it for my kid sister-in-law. That's where I'm taking it now."

"Sister-in-law? What a pity. Your husband's sister."

"No, my sister's husband's sister.—There's your train."

The Proud Shirtfront

(For Allegra Fuller)

Fourchette (I have spoken of her before) was a very shrewd cat. One way she showed wisdom was that she never gave her reasons in full. She gave a sufficient reason for what she did, but she usually kept some of her ideas to herself. Then if things turned out unexpectedly she could still pretend that she had planned it that way.

Sometimes she invented quite complicated reasons to conceal a very simple thought. For instance when she gave up doing the washing at home. She might have said frankly that washday was a great labor and it made her back ache to bend over the tubs. Also that the Roulston Alumnae met on Mondays and she was ashamed to be the only one who had to stay home and wash kittens' rompers and Donny's shirts. Donny, the old sheepdog, used up a shirt a day grubbing in the garden.

But Fourchette did not mention these things. What she said was, she wanted the kittens to grow up as artists, and the best way to encourage that was to have plenty of shirt boards. She meant the stiff pieces of card that come home inside shirts from the laundry. Everyone knows that those are fine for drawing pictures. They take pencil and crayon well, and bright water colors or pastels show up handsomely on that coarse gray. They are just a convenient size and some of the best painters I know have done all their early work on shirt boards.

It is always fun to use things for what they were not intended. This gives you a feeling of ingenuity to begin with, and stimulates invention. Donny grumbled at first about sending the wash to the steam laundry because he thought it would be expensive. But Fourchette insisted that the kittens would do less mischief if they were busy drawing pictures.

It is too soon to say whether the kittens will grow up to be useful artists. At present they are doing murals for the W.P.A. What did happen was that Donny was cured of being roundshouldered. You may well wonder how that was.

Donny was a simple creature, fond of his garden and his studies, and as he grew older he was getting very roundshouldered. Philosophers often do. Fourchette was always telling him to straighten up, and had circulars sent him by the American Posture League. But it was the Salamis Laundry that cured him.

All his life Donny had worn soft shirts that were washed at home, without starch, and of course without boards to keep them smooth. Now when his shirts came from the laundry, each with a stiff cardboard inside it, he was so proud that he thought he would go to town and do some errands. It happened that the shirt he put on had been so heavily starched that the cardboard had stuck inside it. He just slipped it on anyhow, with the board still there, against his broad chest.

I'm telling you that he never looked so smart as he did that day. He wore his old Ecuador hat and his woolly homespuns. With the board inside his shirt he absolutely had to hold himself straight. His chin was high, almost like Mussolini; he couldn't possibly slump down and look shabby. He got to the station late and all the papers were gone except the expensive *Wall Street Journal.* Then the commuters from Oyster Bay and Westbury knew he was one of them. He sat so erect reading it in the smoker that a polo player even asked his advice about stocks and bonds and invited him to lunch at the Union Paddock.

If he was going to lunch at the Paddock he thought he'd better buy a Palm Beach suit so at the bank he cashed a check bigger than he had intended to. He had to get his check endorsed by the fourth vice president, who was so impressed by his upright stance that he asked if Mr. Donny had appointed an executor for his estate.

He went to one of those stores that were always begging him to open a charge account, and annoyed them by paying cash. They intended to sell him a suit that was too tight around the armpits, which gives them a mysterious pleasure. But he stood up so straight while they tried on that they weren't able to fool him.

When he had lunch at the club he was looking so proud and rigid that his new acquaintance was shy of asking him to join a brokerage firm that was being started. That saved him a fortune.

In the afternoon he went to the dentist, and sat so dignified in the chair that the dentist took special care not to drill too close to the nerve.

With his head held high he didn't see very well where he was walking. So he trod on a lady's foot in the elevator, but instead of being angry she thought he had done it on purpose. She invited him to take her to the Rainbow Room for a drink. He explained that he'd love to but his chauffeur would be waiting at the early train. He did not explain that the chauffeur was only the old Chevvy parked up by the firehouse. This was really timidity on his part; but by taking the early train he got home without smelling of gin. He brought with him a can of sardines for Fourchette, after making sure they did not come from Japan, Germany, Italy, Fascist Spain or Jersey City, for his day in town had made him very alert to foreign politics.

He wanted to know if the kittens had drawn any pictures on the other shirtboards, but Fourchette avoided the subject. The kittens had used them to start a bonfire.

"I knew it would do you good to go to town," she said. "When you hold yourself properly you look really distinguished, for a dog."

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Picking Popular Fiction

(Continued from page 4)

The only other large consideration I recall is the taboo upon propaganda of any sort. Popular fiction is designed for entertainment and not for instruction. Consequently, stories written to prove some thesis, regardless of the nature of the thesis, are ordinarily rejected. Editors assume that their readers will resent special pleading in the guise of fiction. In economic and social affairs, the consequence is that short stories are apt to reflect the status quo without argument. This attitude of neutrality is resented by the advocates of causes and especially by literary exponents of revolution. I think the instinct against propaganda is a sound one. Neither Russia nor Germany seems to have improved the quality of its literature by propaganda.

When all these considerations have been taken into account there is still room for the best work of which gifted men and women are capable. Writers who are able to interest large numbers of people are accepted very much on their own terms. They may write for the ages if they can so long as they continue to interest American readers here and now. It is imprudent for editors to attempt to speak from the standpoint of posterity, but I suspect that a number of very popular writers of fiction for widely circulated American magazines may be remembered and enjoyed for as long a time to come as their more precious contemporaries.

It is also true that many story writers of great capacity prefer to appeal to special audiences rather than to a national audience. Most of these who have consciously made this decision write novels rather than short fiction. For the novelist who succeeds in building an audience for his books without the assistance of the magazines, the pecuniary rewards are sufficient. The short story writer who rejects the opportunities available in the magazines has greater difficulty in obtaining an income from his work.

Those who support themselves by writing tend, as in the cases of Stephen Vincent Benét, Jesse Stuart, John Steinbeck, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Morley Callaghan, and Manuel Komroff—all of whom are represented in Mr. O'Brien's current volume—also to write for the popular magazines. These skillful craftsmen, and others, likewise produce well wrought short stories intrinsically designed for small rather than for large audiences. Mr. O'Brien rates their stories aimed at the few as better than their more popular efforts. This is a matter of taste.

The important question is what suggestion for the future of the American short story is to be found in Mr. O'Brien's collection. The short story is changing. This time of economic and social upheaval, of the shifts of political and economic power from one group to another, influences profoundly all of our interests and activities. Fiction reflects these changes; but radical, liberal, or conservative, all demand fun in their literature. Bernard Shaw's wit made his tracts entertaining even to those aloof from his ideas. On the other hand, not even his genius for narrative was sufficient to make Rudyard Kipling's short stories palatable to large audiences when he elected to infuse his writing with conservative propaganda.

If any of the stories chosen by Mr. O'Brien as the best recently written have significance for the future of the art, I suspect that it will be found in the new types portrayed. The awakened social conscience of the past few years has created public interest in the affairs of many groups not ordinarily portrayed in fiction. This spread of sympathy and new solicitude for those who have not fared well in our industrial civilization will inevitably be reflected increasingly in all our creative arts. I do not think, however, that the looser structure or the less skillful craftsmanship, which characterize so many of these stories published in the minor magazines, have anything to suggest to the future.

The business of the story writer is to interest, and interest is the result of artistic achievement. Characters, situations, and opinions are secondary. Interest comes out of the manner of telling. One of Dr. A. J. Cronin's recent novels was published as a serial by an American magazine and two British newspapers. Each publication selected from the long manuscript those portions which the editors deemed most interesting to their several audiences. The American magazine published a romantic story of the coal fields. The British labor paper published those bits of the novel which described most vividly the conditions in the mining areas. The popular British newspaper's version was midway between the romance and the labor story. All were authentic Cronin, a craftsman who knew what he was about.

In work of this sort which appeals by its narrative force to many different kinds of people there is, I think, the clue to the future. Stories are not good because they are unpopular nor bad because they interest millions. The best short stories are the happy fruit of the disciplined efforts of gifted men and women. The level of technical excellence is very high in the popular field. It cannot be ignored either in appraising contemporary achievements or in guessing the direction of future effort.

William L. Chenery is editor of Collier's. The Saturday Review *will shortly publish an article on The Magazine Essay, by Charles W. Ferguson, Associate Editor of* The Reader's Digest.

How do you feel about children?

Do you like them—or can't you stand them?

•

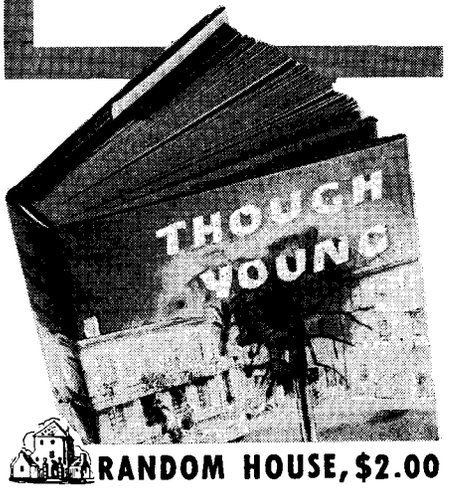
Either way, you'll be fascinated by UM and BOGY, two of the funniest and most horrible children since Penrod and Sam. They're in

Leighton Barret's novel

THOUGH YOUNG

"If they never did anything, and only their unbelievable, inconsequential, and at the same time appallingly direct conversations were recorded, they would still be worth reading about. But in actuality, 'anything' is a pale word to describe what they do! No man, woman, child, dog, cat, or inanimate object is safe within the radius of their hands or voices. No emotion is too sacred, no secret too deep, for Um and Bogey to put to their own practical blackmailing uses. Brilliant prose . . . an excursion out of stuffiness."—*Book-of-the-Month Club News.*

"A wonder for reading and a joy for remembering. . . . It is such a book, indeed, in such a flow of books as deserves what it is getting here, not a review but a personal record of a personal pleasure. I rejoiced in it and, if that is not literary criticism, it is that sometimes rarer thing, a literary delight."—*Saturday Review of Literature*



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Milton in His Century

THE MILTONIC SETTING: PAST AND PRESENT. By E. M. W. Tillyard. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER M. WITHERSPOON

THE process of dethroning, dislodging, or at least disparaging, the great has been going on at a great rate during the past twenty years, and few men of genius in any realm of action or thought have escaped the efforts of certain critics to remove them from the pedestals on which earlier generations had placed them. No single writer of genius, perhaps, has been attacked by so many critics as Milton. His detractors include many diverse types of men and minds, but all agree in their positive dislike of and hostility towards John Milton. So furious has been the onslaught that his enemies have convinced themselves, at least, that the battle has been won. Mr. F. R. Leavis, of Cambridge University, announced in September, 1933, in the literary review, *Scrutiny:* "Milton's dislodgment, in the past decade, after his two centuries of predominance, was effected with remarkably little fuss." And yet, in spite of such "dislodgment," Mr. Tillyard in the present volume comes not to bury Milton, but to praise him—or rather, since he is convinced that Milton is not dead or dislodged or in need of praise, to defend and explain him.

The general purpose of the eight studies collected in Mr. Tillyard's volume is in effect "to resurrect the social Milton of his first biographers and to set him as a poet firmly in his own age." Mr. Tillyard, in common with other serious students of Milton today, would thus spare him "a kind of idolatry that cannot but be punctuated with suppressed laughter; and his unique gifts, instead of suffering the embarrassment of being pedestalled, and smitten with a very dubious brand of limelight, will show up healthy but not the less striking in a normal seventeenth-century setting."

The volume is not merely a denial or refutation of the strictures on Milton, but a series of very definite affirmations and positive contributions. No book in recent years of such small compass has offered more fresh and stimulating ideas to the readers of Milton. The first study, of the origination of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," will, perhaps, have the widest appeal. The more philosophically inclined of Milton's readers will find the chapters on "Milton and Prophetic Poetry," "Milton and Primitive Feeling," and "Milton and Protestantism" of greatest interest. The chapter on Milton's Protestantism is in some ways the most valuable in the book, and a better analysis of Milton's religion and of the essential tenets of seventeenth century Protestantism it would be hard to find.

To Mr. T. S. Eliot's argument that Milton was blind and, in fact, never saw anything, that his poetry appeals to the ear alone, and that he could not convey the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time, Mr. Tillyard replies in his chapter on "Milton's Visual Imagination." He brings into line an array of quotations which, the unprejudiced reader is bound to feel, effectively disprove Mr. Eliot's contentions, and he rightly deplores in this connection the general tendency to judge Milton and indeed all English poets by the standards of Shakespeare. "Shakespeare was a dramatist, and drama tends to be more particular than, say, the ode, or the philosophical poem." Of Milton's style in general there is an illuminating discussion, and of special interest is Mr. Tillyard's unique defense of Milton against the age-old charge of excessive Latinization.

On Keats and Pope Mr. Tillyard has some fresh and penetrating critical comments in connection with certain aspects of Milton's verse. What will strike most readers as perhaps the most surprising thing in the whole book is the author's defense and praise of Pope's translation of Homer's "Iliad." The book closes with a study of the epic setting of "Paradise Lost" and the growth of Milton's epic plans, in which a discussion of Milton's projected "Arthuriad" occupies the central place.

It is too much to hope that either Mr. Tillyard's earlier volume on Milton or this latest study of the Miltonic setting will convince the unwilling critics, but the good sense and good temper of his arguments should at least induce second thoughts and lead to a new and juster estimate of the poet and his work.

Alexander M. Witherspoon is on the English faculty at Yale University, and is an authority on Milton.

Tragicomedy in Berlin

LAUGHTER IN THE DARK. By Vladimir Nabokoff. Indianapolis: the Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by SAMUEL NOCK

A PLOT could hardly be less original or promising than that of "Laughter in the Dark"; so trite is it that the author gives it all in his first paragraph:

> Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus. He was rich, respectable, happy; one day he abandoned his wife for the sake of a youthful mistress; he loved; was not loved; and his life ended in disaster.

That is all—material for sentimental tragedy or trivial moralizing. Nabokoff, however, makes the story interesting because of the way he tells it.

Looking at his characters, all foolish or bad, with ironical detachment, but without cynicism, he presents them and their idiocies with grace and urbanity. He lets them perform their trite doings, lets them work out their horrid schemes, lets them march to inevitable disaster, without getting himself involved at all.

With great literary skill Nabokoff makes his episodes just as exciting as though something of importance were happening. He presents the episodes in convincing settings, however briefly indicated. He has a good deal of fun at the expense of Albinus and Margot and Rex, for although what happens may be tragic enough to Albinus, it can hardly be anything for other people to get worked up over.

The tragedy is essentially no more than humorous, because the characters can rise no higher than comedy. Yet, because there is so much observation of men and women, so much real human nature even if trivial, there is an unexpected amount of material to think about after the rapid and enjoyable reading of the book. "Laughter in the Dark" is high comedy in the old tradition, which laughs at disasters when the disasters are worth only laughter.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
MURDER MAKES A MERRY WIDOW *Robert George Dean* (Crime Club: $2.)	Sleuths Hunter (who loves likker) and Griffith (who loves ladies) just naturally have to solve killing of columnist yclept Collins.	Itsy bitsy clues picked up between drinking bouts and petting parties lead through alcoholic haze to cleverly concealed criminal.	Rollicking
LILIES FOR MADAME *Hugh Austin* (Crime Club: $2.)	Struggling youngster impersonating notorious *chanteuse* gets in tough spot when singer is slain. Home town sweetheart extricates her.	Swank and glittering tropical-cruise background, some suavely brutal villains, much jugglery of evidence, and surprising finish.	Good
DEATH TAKES A DIVE *Eric Heath* (Hillman-Curl: $2.)	Girl operative sees man dive into Beverly Hills pool and emerge murdered. Calls her boss and the twain succeed in solving it.	Two corpses (1 parked in front of police station) robbery, and kidnapping add ginger to logical but not too distinguished deducing.	Run-of-mill

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Where American History Began

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION. A HISTORY OF AMERICAN COLONIAL LIFE. By Curtis P. Nettels. New York: F. S. Crofts & Company. 1938. $5.50.

Reviewed by THOMAS J. WERTENBAKER

AMERICAN historians are awakening to the fact that American history did not begin with the founding of Jamestown and Plymouth, that to understand colonial Virginia and Massachusetts we must know England in the seventeenth century, that colonial Pennsylvania is incomprehensible without a study of its English, Welsh, German, Swiss, and Scotch-Irish background. It is well enough to watch the effect of local conditions upon the Dutch and Flemings of the Hudson, Passaic, and Raritan valleys, but the starting point must be a knowledge of the Dutch and Flemings in Holland and Flanders. It is significant of the new trend in colonial history that Professor Nettels devotes his first five chapters, or more than a sixth of the book, to a study of the European background of American colonization.

In Professor Nettels's volume the story of the life of the people is not crowded out, as in so many histories, by the endless details of intercolonial wars and the squabbles of the Assemblies with the English governors. We follow the colonists into their quaint little churches, see them at work on the tobacco or rice plantations, sending out their fishing fleets to the Grand Banks, or loading their brigs at the wharves of Boston or New Haven; we enter their homes to watch the women bending over the churn or whirling the spinning-wheel, or preparing a meal in the huge fireplace. We witness the growth of an educational system, beginning with the "old field" schools and the use of the hornbook and culminating in the establishment of Harvard, William and Mary, Princeton, and other colleges. Colonial culture develops under our eyes—the beginnings of an American literature, the creation of distinct types of architecture, the founding of colonial newspapers, the growth of interest in music and the theater, the creation of a group of artistic craftsmen.

Professor Nettels's book is valuable, also, because he has availed himself of the latest scholarship in colonial history. An astonishing number of books have been published in the field in recent years, books on colonial education, agriculture, literature, government, commerce, religion, transportation, customs, and nothing of importance seems to have escaped his watchful eye. He has evaluated them, digested their contents, and gives their conclusions to the reader in condensed form.

He is obviously concerned by the emergence of social classes in colonial America, the creation of a group of aristocratic planters in the South and of wealthy merchants and capitalists in the North. In fact, it may be said that the conflict of classes, manifesting itself in government, trade, religion, and education, is the theme of the entire book. This treatment, although lending zest to the narrative, is apt to give us a warped perspective. The wonder is, not that class divisions developed in the colonies, but that life was so largely democratic, certainly far more democratic than in any European country.

The author has been notably successful in treating the thirteen colonies as a unit. Anyone who has written colonial history knows how difficult this is. To fit commercial colonies, tobacco colonies, and rice colonies; English, Dutch, Germans, Scotch-Irish, Huguenots, Welsh; Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Moravians, in the same topical divisions requires rare skill, and Professor Nettels is to be congratulated on the success he has attained. He has given us a scholarly, well-organized, and clearly written story of the colonial period, which will undoubtedly find favor in many college courses on colonial history. Although the necessity for condensation has robbed the book of those interesting details which vivify a past period, all who wish a bird's-eye view of the introductory period of American history would do well to turn to this book.

Thomas J. Wertenbaker, of the history faculty of Princeton University, is the author of "Founding of American Civilization: The Middle Colonies."

Classic Spain

CASTILIAN LITERATURE. By A. F. G. Bell. New York: Oxford University Press. 1938. $5.

Reviewed by ERNEST BOYD

READERS of Spanish and Portuguese literature will need no introduction to the author of this volume. His study of Luis de León is the standard work on the subject and, in addition to his "Portuguese Literature" he has written a very useful general history of Spanish literature. The present work is more restricted in scope, as its title indicates. It is a useful reminder of the curious fact that the great classics of Spain were Castilian: the "Cid," "Celestina," "Lazarillo de Tormes," Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón, Quevedo, and in more recent times, Pereda. The outstanding moderns, on the other hand, Pérez de Ayala, Unamuno, Baroja, Azorín, Galdós, Valle-Inclán, Gabriel Miró, all come from parts other than Castile.

"The apparently narrow field of purely Castilian literature," says Mr. Bell, "is a deep rich soil," which contains all the "essential masterpieces" of the literature of Spain. Regionalism and individualism are the terms that at once occur to those who know Spain, her people, and her

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literature—a fact which seems to escape those who try today to simplify the present ghastly conflict for purposes of political and economic propaganda. There are many Spains, but in the heyday of her history the mind of Spain expressed its unity, its enduring quality, in the great classics which are the subject of Mr. Bell's warm enthusiasm and authoritative scholarship. The unity of nationality and religion was the fundamental idea which held the divergent and warring elements of the Spanish people together in the characteristically Castilian rejection of Renaissance individualism. Nowadays we are witnessing the collapse of a beautiful structure from which the inner life had long since disappeared.

"Massiveness, balance, concentration and intensity are the means by which the Castilian excels his models and produces masterpieces which are at once glowing and substantial, passionate and austere, concrete and flamelike, condensing a copious power of invention and improvisation into a rich artistic unity." Such is Mr. Bell's definition of the essential genius of Castile. In turn he discusses the great writers in their relation to universalism, comprehensiveness, democracy, realism, and so forth, thus isolating their main qualities. His book, with its absence of references and learned paraphernalia, is evidently not for the uninitiated, but it will be welcomed by all who know Mr. Bell's forty years of service to the Peninsular literatures.

Ernest Boyd is the author of "Studies in Ten Literatures."

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Thomas à Becket

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY. By Robert Speaight. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY DWIGHT SEDGWICK

THE author of this book, Mr. Robert Speaight, has won a well deserved reputation as an admirable actor in the part of Thomas à Becket, in T. S. Eliot's play, "Murder in the Cathedral." The play itself is remarkable, and came as a relief and consolation to those, who, bred upon ancient and stagnant ideas, had been bewildered by the joyous enthusiasm of young intellectuals over Mr. Eliot's poem, "Waste Land." The character of the Archbishop is brilliantly brought into high relief by the Four Tempters, and by the Chorus, which adds a mystical horror by its baroque and macabre lines:

> I have tasted the living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels. . . .
> I have felt . . . the evasive flank of the fish.

It is this passage that comes back to me on reading Mr. Speaight's book, "I have felt the evasive flank of the fish," but not much more. I have not been able firmly to grasp a comprehension of the historical St. Thomas's character. I think the play has molded the biographer unduly. Medieval biography is difficult, the few facts handed down by chroniclers do not really lend themselves to vertebrate structure. Mr. Speaight has rightly aimed to give us a spiritual picture, and has maintained a most successful restraint upon a natural admiration for a great man, who, in his struggle with King Henry II, represented the spiritual against the material. It is a very fair book, judicial and kindly. But I cannot help feeling that Mr. Speaight has so incorporated himself in Eliot's Becket, that he forgets the desire of commonplace men for a biography sufficiently commonplace as to be easily intelligible. His portrait, if one may take the analogy of tapestry, suggests that he has followed the portrait drawn by the chronicler of St. Alban's, as incorporated in Matthew Paris's "Chronica Majora," but with a special fashion of needlework, taught him by Mr. Eliot, weaving, as suggested by the chorus,

> like a pattern of living worms
> In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

Poetry has its own graces; but the especial virtue of a biographer is to study his materials, make up his mind as to the character of his hero, and present that image as definitely as he can. Here, with the best intentions in the world, the commonplace reader fails to get a definite picture of the Archbishop, or of the King. It is a little as if the poet of "The Waste Land" had touched this book with his poetical wand, and had rendered it a little more difficult to the non-intellectual to understand.

"Land-Locked Poet"

WILLIAM COWPER, HUMANITARIAN. By Lodwick C. Hartley. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER COWIE

THE trouble with a great deal of literary scholarship in America today is that it is concerned too little with the art of writing. When a scholar finds a subject, he trundles it into the laboratory (instead of following it to its lair) and submits it to measurements and tests. Worse still, he may decide to work on only one muscle, member, or nerve-circuit. He dissects, sorts, labels, and goes away (his subject still in the laboratory) to write a book in terms of evidence which no colleague or rival could seriously challenge. The whole process is analytical. The subject is never reintegrated despite the use of tidy summaries. Yet the essential art of a creative writer can be finally comprehended only by an effort of the imagination, and important "conclusions" must often be set forth tentatively in the form of opinion, without one shred of authority.

In Lodwick C. Hartley's admirably worked out study of Cowper we learn how high a content of humanitarianism was in the blood of the poet. This is important—but not very important. Mr. Hartley believes that earlier biographers have made too much of Cowper as an amiable, isolated valetudinarian who poked in his garden, drank tea with unexciting females, and made intimates of rabbits. He has therefore assembled all the evidence for Cowper's humanitarianism under the heads of poor-relief, abolition, foreign missions, India, war, education, and the prevention of cruelty to animals. He honorably states facts which conflict with his thesis; but for all that, he has an air of trying to urge a conclusion more significant than is warranted. Cowper was neither original nor practical enough to be well characterized as a "fearless foe of oppression." The older biographers, who showed him as a "land-locked" poet, were intuitively right: drowsy days and tranquil evenings at Olney had more relationship with what is valuable in Cowper's poetry than those interludes during which he was sincerely roused by man's inhumanity to man.

Yet if Mr. Hartley is to some extent the victim of a system of scholarship, he has written a useful book. His study is packed with facts well organized and cogently presented. Historical background is marshaled with fidelity and skill: one is tempted to say that the chief value of this volume is its fine survey of the initial steps of the humanitarian movement in England. Only—some day all this new material, duly proportioned, should be brought under the same roof with the rest of the biographical material. Then we could have the complete Cowper.

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Early Christianity

THE HISTORY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY. By Johannes Weiss. Translated under the editorship of Frederick C. Grant. New York: Wilson-Erickson Inc.

THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES. By Kenneth Latourette, New York: Harper & Brothers. 1937. $3.50.

THE THOUSAND YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY. The same. 1938. $3.50.

Reviewed by REINHOLD NIEBUHR

THE two-volume work by the famed New Testament scholar, Johannes Weiss, was brought out in German just before the outbreak of the World War. It had a definitive influence on New Testament scholarship and is to this day a valuable source book for specialists. Its translation was delayed longer than usual, probably because the war destroyed contact between German and Anglo-Saxon scholarship for some years. Though it is a book intended primarily for scholars, any thoughtful reader interested in its field of research will find it rewarding. Professor Weiss, with Albert Schweitzer, changed the whole course of New Testament criticism by making the apocalyptic element in the teachings of Jesus the principle of their interpretation rather than, as liberal scholars had believed, an incidental element in his thought.

Weiss is as resourceful and profound in dealing with the sources and characteristic emphases of the Pauline epistles as with the gospels. His book is consequently of permanent value, and Dean Grant and his collaborators are to be congratulated on the service they have rendered by this excellent translation.

The second, as well as the first, of Professor Latourette's ambitious six-volume history of Christianity has now been published. The publishers promise a new volume every eighteen months. Mr. Latourette's particular field is the expansion of Christianity in the period of the modern missionary enterprise. His first volume therefore is concerned with a vast realm of scholarship outside his field. The mastery of the material in this field represents a feat of prodigious diligence. Every competent work has apparently been consulted. The detailed problems of research are, however, consigned to treatment in the footnotes so that the general reader, for whom the work is intended, can stray into the bypaths of specific historical problems as much or as little as interest may dictate.

The difficulties with such an undertaking are that the collation of a vast mass of factual data on the expansion of the Christian religion seems to have obscured rather than revealed the inner meaning of the facts and recorded events. One witnesses the expansion of Christianity in the ancient world and is told that it annihilated the pagan religions of Rome more completely than any conquering religion. But one is at a loss to understand the inner genius of the movement. Whether Christianity is a religion of which Jesus may rightfully be regarded as the "founder" or whether it really has its beginning in a faith which is formulated by St. Paul is a question which is raised but not answered. All of the critical problems are raised but not many are answered.

The second volume, covering the history of the world's only "Christian civilization," that is, the medieval culture, suffers particularly from Latourette's too atomistic approach. Since this was the particular age in the history of the West which was really dominated by Christianity, the important problem is to discover just what kind of an amalgam this Christianity was, what resources of Roman law, Greek philosophy, and Teutonic tribalism entered into it. The author offers us nowhere a broad perspective upon the whole sweep of thought and life in the medieval period. Instead he records interesting and significant historical events and then seeks to isolate the Christian influence upon these events. Frequently this is done in terms of analyzing particular characters, Dante, Aquinas, St. Francis, etc. in an effort to determine whether or not they were "Christian." This method leads to such curiously obvious verdicts as: "Dante is obviously the product of the Christianity of the Middle Ages." Even when movements rather than personalities are considered, the historical estimates are either too specific or too vague. It is for instance of no particular value to know that "the Renaissance had both Christian and anti-Christian manifestations." The question is, what was the real genius of the Renaissance, what its basic emphases, and in what respect are they derived from Christian and from classical sources or from an interesting combination of both.

It is of course too much to ask that one man should cover the history of the Western world and enter profoundly into the meaning of every period and the logic of development which leads from one period to another. Therefore it is enough to know that one man has mastered the surface and the detailed events of the whole Christian era in a remarkable feat of scholarship.

Doctor in Lapland

LAPLAND JOURNEY. By Halliday Sutherland. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by AGNES ROTHERY

LIKE people who prefer their meals served with all the courses put on the table together at the same time, so authors and publishers assume that "armchair travelers" prefer an informal diet mixed with conversation and description, information and personal anecdote, movement and meditation. Dr. Halliday Sutherland furnishes this menu acceptably in his "Lapland Journey" which, as the title indicates, is an account of his trip through Finland and Finnish Lapland. Train, motorbus, and reindeer sledge furnished his transportation: fishing for trout and salmon furnished part of his recreation. He saw and describes people and scenery, and is accurate in his historical and geographical data. Since he is an Englishman, it is natural that England and London should serve him as his norm of comparison, and American armchair readers will be indulgent to this.

Lighter than Air

WHAT ABOUT THE AIRSHIP? By Commander C. E. Rosendahl. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $3.50.

THERE must be something extraordinary about the English course at Annapolis. Every man who comes out of the place seems able to drive straight to the heart of the matter he is discussing in clean prose, without figures of speech. This time it is our first expert on rigid airships (both in time and merit), growing indignant about the shabby treatment the big gas bags have received in print and conversation. He points out that in spite of the *Hindenburg* disaster, airships remain the safest form of mechanical transportation yet devised by man, and the most rapid over long distances; that we should all be making transoceanic trips in them at this moment were it not for the unfortunate fact that the United States has a monopoly of the only suitable inflation material (helium), while Germany has a monopoly of the necessary technical skill. He faces every objection and answers it; devotes more space to the various airship accidents than any other writer and demonstrates that most of them have been due to official stupidity in over-riding the opinions of experienced airship men. The book has not the narrative interest of Captain Lehmann's on the same subject; but if enough Americans read it, the airship will probably be remanded down for a new trial.

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The New Books

Belles Lettres

THE POEMS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A NEW VARIORUM EDITION. Venus and Adonis, Lucrece, The Passionate Pilgrim, The Phoenix and the Turtle, A Lover's Complaint. Edited by Hyder Edward Rollins. Lippincott. 1938. $7.50.

"The problems involved in editing five separate poems of Shakespeare in a single volume," says the editor, "are entirely different from those connected with any one of his plays and much more complicated." The general arrangement of the earlier volumes in this series, however, is followed here. The text of the earliest printed versions is accompanied at the foot of the page by notes giving variant readings down to the latest critical edition, and brief annotations, while longer discussions are reserved for an Appendix. The title-page and dedication of "Venus and Adonis" and of "Lucrece" are reproduced in facsimile from the first quartos.

The total number of lines in the five poems is greater than that in the longest of the plays, but the textual problems are simpler. It seems highly probable that "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" were set up from the poet's own manuscript, and that he corrected the proofs. No such mass of exegesis as has gathered about the great tragedies looms up here. Yet the selection of comments on the poems is no easy task; it seems to have been performed by Professor Rollins with care and discretion. An especially interesting section deals with the vogue of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," tracing the gradual decline in their popularity in the seventeenth century, and the neglect with which they were treated in the century following. In 1780 Malone found the former piece "not so entirely void of poetical merit as it has been represented," but real appreciation began again with Coleridge's lectures (1808). Many editions of Shakespeare in the first half of the nineteenth century omitted the poems altogether; it was not until after 1850 that more discriminating criticism prevailed.

The importance of this volume is obviously not restricted to students of Shakespeare's poems; it will also be of great assistance to those whose chief interest lies in the dramatic works.

W. W. L.

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Saturday Review of Literature

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LIVERIGHT

Biography

THE HISTORY OF ST. LOUIS. By Jean, Sire de Joinville, Seneschal of Champagne. Translated by Joan Evans. Oxford University Press. 1938. $3.

There is no need for a reviewer to praise Joinville. He had a good story to write—that of a great king and the Sixth Crusade—and he wrote it with gusto. Historians all know his work, and anyone who is interested in human nature would do well to study this completely honest, because unconscious, revelation of the ideas of a class and an age. The only question is whether this new translation will encourage more people to read a great book. Of the four other versions only that of Marzials in Everyman's Library is comparable to this in accuracy. Miss Evans has followed the original text somewhat more literally, and her style is more consistent. On the other hand, her deliberately archaic English will annoy some readers. It is not at all certain that the best way to give the flavor of thirteenth century French is to use sixteenth century English. In some cases it completely misrepresents Joinville's style, as when his "Oil, mout volentiers," is translated as "Certes aye" (p. 71). Readers who are unfamiliar with the history of the period will not find the introduction very helpful, and the notes, hidden in the back with no references to them in the text, do little to remedy this deficiency. Altogether, this translation will be useful chiefly to those whose eyesight demands larger type and less crowded pages than are to be found in Marzials's edition.

J. R. S.

SOJOURNER TRUTH, GOD'S FAITHFUL PILGRIM. By Arthur Huff Fauset. University of North Carolina Press. 1938. $1.

This book is the second in a series of ten biographies of prominent American Negroes.

About the slave-child Isabella there was little to attract notice except her plainness of feature, her instinctive rebelliousness, and a certain "spiritual" quality in her eyes. Sold on the block, mistreated, pampered, married, converted (in the Pauline manner) to Jesus, she reached early middle age and freedom with a background hardly different from that common to Northern ex-slaves in the 1830's. She never learned to read and write; until her death in 1883 her jargon retained traces of the rural New York Dutch which was the language of her childhood.

Yet before full middle age she had been the innocent chief actor in a scandal growing out of one of the most sordid cults of the fabulous thirties and forties; and long before 1870 she had become a national figure, a scorpion's sting to the doubters and the hypocritical, a sojourner carrying God's truth to the needy. All the great ones of a North laboring in social transition knew about her, and many were proud to shake her hand. In most of the movements for social reform she seems to have played a part, and doubtless her sharpness of tongue and sound folk-sense leavened somewhat the rhapsodic liberalism of her age. Death found her still fighting, now almost alone, for her people, seeking a sensible enough solution for the problems of a race that no longer had slogan-value for a triumphant industrial capitalism.

Mr. Fauset tells the story well, and much research into forgotten sources lends conviction to the account.

J. D. A.

Fiction

WIND OVER WISCONSIN. By August Derleth. Scribners. 1938. $2.50.

No manifestation of the creative spirit has been more interesting in our time than the determination to recover the past. It partakes not at all of the impulse to escape from the troubled present. Rather, writers like Walter Edmonds attempt to remind us of what we have been to clarify our ideas of what we wish to become.

In his new novel August Derleth invites inspection of a significant moment in the history of his own state, Wisconsin. He shows us the settlers saying farewell to the frontier and greeting the day of creative enterprise. During the period between 1831 and 1838, the Indian fighting stopped; the importance of the fur trade diminished; the clearing of the land for cultivation began. Mr. Derleth wishes to throw a bridge across an obscure interval of history, linking the familiar country of the present to the terra incognita of the past. His impulse is honest and admirable; but his execution of the plan is ineffectively engineered.

The chief difficulty lies in Mr. Derleth's inability to bring his characters to life. Each of them wears a label around his neck and shows the strain of carrying it. Chalfonte, American-born son of a French settler of aristocratic birth, is the stout-hearted idealist. Hercules Dousman, fur trader, is the realist with a clear-eyed view of destiny. Black Hawk is the "noble savage." Each of them bears an embarrassing resemblance to the Fourth of July orator, complete with soap-box. There is a flash of purple in every casual utterance.

More disastrous, still, is the fact that the narrative breaks in two. The only link between the part dealing with the Indian

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campaigns against the settlers and the part dealing with opening of the land is that the central character, Chalfonte, presides with amiable ineffectuality over both. The effect of climax persistently eludes Mr. Derleth's eager efforts. The book collapses into a series of scenes out of a pageant, played by characters all of whom are under-developed, some of whom have been created for the sole purpose of dying melodramatic deaths. Historical figures like Zachary Taylor and Jefferson Davis make irrelevant appearances, seeming to remark in pompous asides to the reader: "Surely, you know how important I am to become." Two perfunctory romances emphasize the anemic character of the whole narrative.

Mr. Derleth seems determined to impress the reader with the cultivation of the early Wisconsin settlers. They quote Pascal to one another. They sigh over the unfortunate demise of "M. Goethe." Their letters from abroad describe neatly the state of European culture. The wind over Wisconsin settles down into a caressing breeze.

J. G.

DEATH SOLVES NOTHING. By Margaret Sothern. Sheed & Ward. 1938. $2.50.

It is a little difficult to understand what Miss Sothern is getting at in this story, because although it is ostensibly the account of a German Catholic girl of Polish ancestry who adopts communism, great parts of it read like adaptations of Francis Beeding. Sophia is not a convincing Catholic, and therefore her harping on a church wedding at the end of the book seems forced. Although she is given reason enough to hate the Nazis, her reasons for adopting communism seem trivial. When the poor stenographer becomes the fashionable agent of Moscow, the story becomes one of chase and thrills and nothing more.

As an exposure of Nazidom the book is feeble; as an anti-communist document it is worthless; and if it is just a story, it is pretty much of a platypus.

S. N.

SPRING IS A WOMAN. By Natalie Shipman. Greystone. 1938. $2.

Aimed squarely at the most naive and feminine part of the rental library trade, this is a triumph of slick and mawkish sentimentality.

The central character is Anthony Vane, 45 years old, ever so charming, ever so romantic, but weak and fated to be dominated by women. He is an artist, quite a good one too, but for twenty years he has hardly touched a picture. This is the fault of his rich, beautiful, and shallow wife who drags him about Europe and stifles his creative instinct. But when Averil dies, leaving him both freedom and wealth, Anthony returns to a pleasantly "unspoiled" Connecticut village and a variety of emotional crises. They concern his adolescent daughter, the good but stupid woman whom he marries, the young woman whom he loves not wisely and not very well.

Miss Shipman tells her story with obvious sincerity and a lush, jittery style.

O. P.

YOUTH WITHOUT GLORY. By Baroness von Hutten. Dutton. 1938. $2.

NO MORE, NO LESS. By Harriet Henry. The same. $2.50.

After all, now that the time had really come, Mrs. Birdsong was not very glad to leave the asylum. Nineteen years is a long time, her large grey-and-silver rooms were charming and comfortable, and the views from the windows—they had taken the bars away years ago—were now familiar to her, and well loved. . . .

Thus, gentle reader, does "Youth Without Glory" start, bang off on the first page. It is hard to imagine any one with enough lack of curiosity to put the book down, after that one.

Mrs. Birdsong has been mad. Her madness has exerted some sort of physical magic, and the years have only enhanced the youthful beauty which the Baroness von Hutten so graphically describes. Mrs. Birdsong might be her own daughter. What's more she is rich, gay, innocent, and totally unable to remember what it was that drove her insane. You can imagine the complications that life in fashionable London, one of whose inhabitants is her divorced and wicked husband, might present to Mrs. Birdsong. Baroness von Hutten has imagined them, of course. And, at least half way through, the book makes entertaining reading, but it never lives up to the first chapter, and the end is all too fortuitous, even granting the fact that Mrs. Birdsong really does deserve to live happily ever after. It's a good plot, gone a little commonplace and badly overstuffed with the best stock English characters.

The jacket of "No More, No Less" says the novel is about "refined young people, eager for life." The characters are young, and eager for sensation, anyhow. Refinement is a shy bird. Harriet Henry herself isn't very much at ease in those brilliant drawing rooms and well-known bars, and her characters converse in a spurious combination of wisecrack and lahdy-da which is painful indeed. Any number of cheap little things happen to any number of cheap little people, and the book has the same general relationship to the so smart world it tries to paint as a banana split curb-serviced from the local drug store bears to Crepes Suzette in the Rainbow Room.

F. W.

Poetry

POEMS. By Rex Warner. Knopf. 1938. $2.

Admirers of Rex Warner's novel, "The Wild Goose Chase," will not be disappointed in this book of poems. The novel was noteworthy for the candor of its allegory and the skill with which it was maintained; the very prose was unusual —instant, but carefully controlled; finely wrought, but not in the least afraid of passionate exaltation. These poems have the same qualities. Many of them—the best of them—deal with the class struggle; the symbol is frequently a bird, just as the Wild Goose stood for the ultimate ideal of man's happiness and freedom. They have a greater immediacy: the four quatrains of "Storm and War," where symbol, meaning, and emotion are perfectly fused, have a force which the novel, because of its form, could not generate. But this force is not the result of mere concentration. The striking thing about Mr. Warner is his easy directness. The poems are intricate, subtle, strange sometimes to the point of perversity; but they are always honest.

The symbolic technique is common enough; but so many poets use it so obliquely, so cryptically, that one sometimes fancies that the privacy of their symbols and the Orphic pains they take not to be understood may really be disguises, if not for an essential sterility, at least for the uneasiness they feel in using the device at all. There is no uneasiness here. The heraldic lion, the kites, the palms, even the poor, dim, astonished seal in his whale-obstructed cave—these are as frankly interpretative as the towers and swamps and beasts of the comparable older system. There is no time for obscurity. Consequently, when the poems fail they fail brutally: there is nothing to save them, and we get such a line as *Twining of serpents! Halitosis of lions!* But when they succeed—"Storm and War," "Light and Air," and most of the bird-poems—they are things to remember with gratitude. The publisher tells us that Mr. Warner was at Oxford with Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis (one sometimes wonders what literate Englishman was not); he has nothing to learn from any of them.

D. F.

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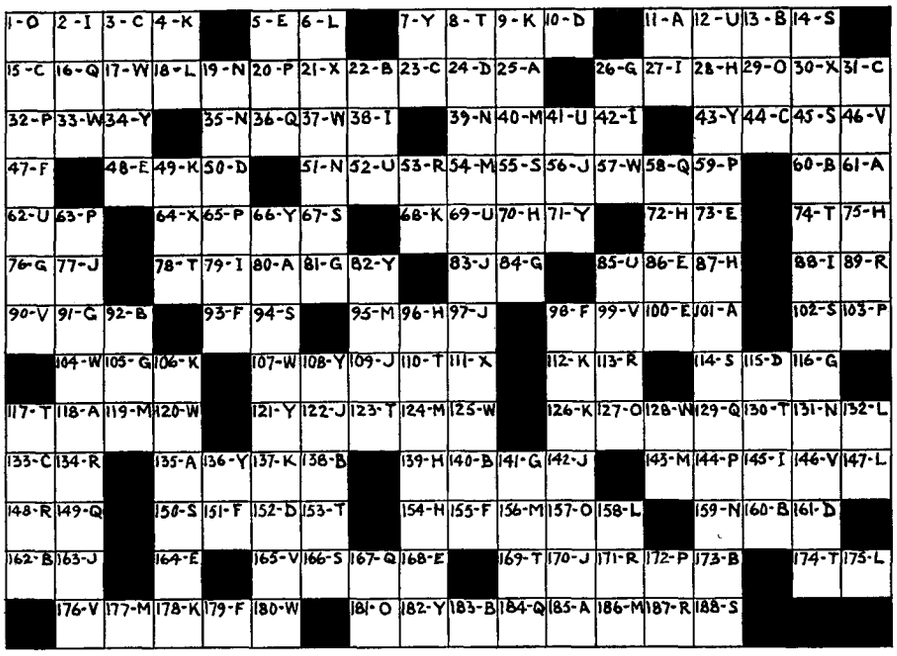
Double-Crostics: No. 221

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 24 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Easily won contest.

B. Incised; notched.

C. Greek letter of alphabet.

D. Hebrew letter of alphabet.

E. Pygmy people of French Equatorial Africa.

F. Son of Rustum.

G. Jingled.

H. Chief of the Nibelungs (German myth).

I. Rose above.

J. Mood of arrogance (2 words).

K. Anything merely temporary.

L. Put in disorder.

M. Tending to overspread.

N. Foil.

O. Loop with a running knot.

P. Latin case (gram.).

Q. Unity.

R. Japanese island in China sea.

S. Italian painter (1518-1594).

T. Confused mixture.

U. Pagan goddess celebrated at the vernal equinox.

V. Soapy froth or foam.

W. Second name of queen of France (1755-1793).

X. Taken away by force.

Y. Acute of mind (comp).

WORDS

11 80 61 101 118 135 185 25

140 160 92 138 173 162 22 13 60 183

23 31 3 15 133 44

24 152 10 161 50 115

164 100 86 48 73 168 5

93 155 151 47 179 98

81 105 76 84 141 91 116 26

96 139 154 87 70 72 28 75

145 2 88 27 79 42 38

122 83 109 170 56 163 97 77 142

106 126 68 4 178 9 137 112 49

132 18 6 175 147 158

124 156 95 143 177 119 40 186 54

159 35 39 51 131 19

157 127 29 1 181

59 63 103 172 32 20 65 144

36 167 16 58 184 129 149

113 187 148 53 89 134 171

114 102 67 45 94 188 14 150 55 166

130 123 153 78 110 117 174 74 169 8

69 52 62 85 41 12

165 99 146 176 46 90

17 107 104 37 57 180 33 120 128 125

30 64 21 111

82 136 66 182 43 108 7 121 71 34

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

AT the American Library Association meeting in Kansas City this week, New York State carried off two special honors. Kate Seredy (Montgomery, N. Y.) was awarded the John Newbery medal for her juvenile *White Stag* (Viking); and the new Caldecott medal for the best illustrated book for children in 1937 went to Dorothy P. Lathrop (Albany, N. Y.) for her work in *Animals of the Bible* (Stokes). ☞Miss Julia F. Carter, head of children's work at the Cincinnati Public Library, made the presentation.

☞Speaking of honors we were pleased that *Highland River,* that very unusual story by Neil Gunn (Lippincott) was awarded the James Tait Black Prize in England as the best novel of 1937. ☞Did June Provines, of the Chicago *Tribune,* ever locate the silver tankard said to have belonged to John Bunyan which was (some months ago) being pursued in the Middle West? Dr. Frank Mott Harrison, of 3, Bigwood Ave., Hove, Sussex, England, a bibliographer doing research on Bunyan, is trying to trace the tankard; the engraved inscription upon it may help to establish dates in Bunyan's career. Correspondents of Miss Provines' column in the Chicago *Tribune* remembered having seen the tankard at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Dr. Harrison would be grateful to hear from anyone who has information. ☞The publishing trade records two appointments this week: Lambert Davis, editor of *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* becomes editor of Bobbs-Merrill's Trade Book Department, with headquarters at the New York office. ☞Angus Cameron, formerly of Bobbs-Merrill, has gone to the New York office of Little, Brown. ☞Houghton Mifflin announces a Fellowship Award of $1000 to Maurine Whipple of St. George, Utah, for a projected novel, *The Great Joshua,* covering three generations of Mormon life. ☞H. M.'s current Fellowship novel, *Young Man with a Horn,* seems to be going places.

Crockford—and Horace

☞An anniversary that we shall probably have to celebrate all by ourself is the 80th birthday, this year, of *Crockford's Clerical Directory,* now published by the Oxford Press. Among our private hobbies are title-page mottoes; that of *Crockford* has always seemed to us excessively odd. It is two famous lines from one of Horace's Satires (10th of the first book):—

. . . . Satis est equitem mihi plaudere, ut audax
Contemptis aliis, explosa Arbuscula dixit.

Which we can translate: "I'm satisfied if the carriage trade gives me a hand, as plucky Arbuscula said, high-hatting the others who hissed her off the stage." ☞This is a classic tag for those who play over the heads of the groundlings; but we have never been able to conjecture why it should be thought apposite for the title page of old *Crockford?* ☞If we thought the Oxford Press would accept it we'd suggest a livelier motto for that Who's Who of the English Church, viz. Sherlock Holmes, in *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman*: "The good vicar's name I took, of course, out of my Crockford." ☞Speaking of Holmes, he—or at any rate Watson—knew his Horace, for another of the Satires (the first) is quoted at the end of *A Study in Scarlet.* ☞At this time of year, perhaps by reading of so many college commencements, we usually dabble a little in Horace and get surprises. Looking up the Crockford motto we noticed with pleasure that in the very next line he speaks of someone as a louse (*cimex*) which shows that figure of speech supposed hodiernal is close to 2000 years old. ☞It pleases us too to be reminded that Horace suffered from hay fever (*Epistles,* I, 1, 108). ☞And if we were hunting an inscription for a college auditorium what could be prettier than this (*Epistles,* I, 4, 8)

QUID VOVEAT DULCI NUTRICULA MAIUS ALUMNO
QUI SAPERE ET FARI POSSIT QUAE SENTIAT

But it would have to be a small college, as suggested by the affectionate diminutive *nutricula.* ☞It would interest us to know if any booksellers still read Horace, who was once almost the Trade's patron saint. We suspect that Mr. Laukhuff does, in Cleveland; are there others? ☞Speaking of college commencements, the Q. Associates applaud Harvard's honorary degree to Walt Disney.

☞Macmillans have taken over the publications of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Among the newest issues are the complete catalogue of the Whitney Museum with forewords by Juliana R. Force, director, and Herman More, curator. ☞Members of the Limited Editions Club are rubbing their hands over the magnificent three volumes of Boswell's *Johnson* procured for them by the diligent enterprise of Mr. George Macy. This edition, prepared by Edward G. Fletcher, prints in full (for the first time) the annotations by Mrs. Thrale Piozzi. These entertaining and intimate marginalia were made by Mrs. Piozzi in two copies of the *Life* which now belong respectively to Harvard University and to Colonel Ralph Isham. ☞Scribner's says they've had a request from the "Marital Relations Institute" for a review copy of John Klempner's novel *No Stork at Nine.* That seems reasonable, but then we don't know anything about either the book or the Institute. ☞The most agreeable episode of the week is told by Eleanor Foote of the Mistletoe Book Shop, 25 Dove Street, Albany. A publisher (name divulged if disbelieved) sent her a book she hadn't ordered, gratis, "because we like the name of your street."

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 220)

JOHN KEATS: "SONNET ON THE SONNET."

Let us find out, if we must be constrained,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of Poesy: . . . .
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown.

One sure way to a grand time!
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